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# *The Icelandic Canadian*



**NINTH and TENTH VOLUMES**

**1950 to 1952**



A Quarterly Magazine  
Published by The Icelandic Canadian Club  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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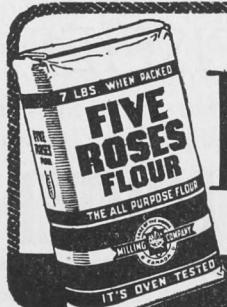
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# The Icelandic Canadian

Vol. 9

Winnipeg, Man., Autumn 1950

No. 1

## Reflections on the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Celebration of The Settlement of Icelanders in Manitoba

It has been said that in a federation such as The United States, where there is only one national language, or Canada where there are two official languages, English and French, the different ethnic groups should make no effort to preserve their distinctive national holidays or commemorate at festive gatherings the sacrifices and achievements of their own pioneers who first set foot upon American soil. Even the annual celebration of these national groups should, it is contended, be eliminated, at least as soon as the transition period is thought to be over, and all public celebrations should be in commemoration of events of general interest in American or Canadian history.

This is an extremely narrow point of view and is based upon an erroneous conception of what the ultimate objective is which these two multiplex democracies seek to reach. It was never intended that an exclusive pattern should be maintained and that others should, after a transition period, entirely disappear. Rather was it intended that in the building of these two nations certain principles and ideals, common to the people who came to this land or earnestly sought by them, should be strengthened and preserved. The process is essentially an integration, not a transition or assimilation. Each ethnic group, and in a way each individual, makes its or his contribution, be it far reaching or infinitesimal.

Was it an accident, or destiny — perhaps a planned destiny — that this process of the weaving of a fabric of democracy, many coloured get so blended as to emerge slowly but surely in one harmonious whole, so distinctively a product of this continent, should have taken place within a few score years prior to the greatest threat, in the history of Western civilization, to all that it embodies and rests upon. In the defence of that very civilization the United States has taken the lead and Canada is playing a very important role. And no where else has the process of integration from divers elements and differential factors been so thoroughly and harmoniously carried out.

It is therefore very fitting and proper that the various national groups in this land, who have contributed to this unique democratic process, who have made sacrifices in the past and may have to make even greater sacrifices in the future, should every once in a while pause and let their minds wander back to the glories and achievements of the past. Their thoughts should dwell alike upon great events in the nations of their origin and upon the sacrifices of those who left their native lands to share on this continent a common destiny — a destiny that may be fateful not only to themselves but to all of mankind.

And so it is that on St. Andrews night the Canadian of Scottish descent lets his mind wander back to Scot-

land; on St. George's day the English-Canadian thinks of Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights; on November 6, the Swede recalls the glories of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII; and on June 17th the Icelander reviews the verbal battles for freedom waged by Jón Sigurdsson. At other times the festive occasion centres upon the fortitude and steadfastness of the pioneers who migrated to this land. Both types of solemn meditation and festive celebration provide inspiration and should be encouraged. One hastens to add that such gatherings need not, and do not detract from purely Canadian and American celebrations in which all participate.



People of Icelandic extraction have a double reason for maintaining their national holidays and celebrating events in their history both here and in their former native land. There is first of all the reason which all the ethnic groups have for staging their special celebrations: that they may the better draw upon the cultural wealth of their father land and mother tongue so that their contributions to citizenship here may be the more ample and bountiful.

But we, Vestur-Íslendingar, owe a separate and distinct duty in relation to the cultural heritage of Iceland. It is separate and distinct because of the very special position which the Icelandic language and hence Icelandic literature should occupy in the cultural world, particularly where the English language is spoken. The fact that Icelandic is at once a classic and a modern language, one of the root languages of English and a repository of a literature, ancient and modern, of a high order, is something which need not be enlarged upon here. But it should be kept in mind as we sadly face the nak-

ed fact that Icelandic is fast disappearing as a language of the home and the local gathering. A duty falls upon us to preserve and strengthen everything which in some way may be a compensation for the loss of the spoken tongue or to a limited extent may replace it.



When the Icelanders migrated to America they felt a keen sense of loss as they separated from their mother country and moved to a land so far away that they feared that all contacts would be permanently broken. The immediate reaction was a determination to do all within their power to preserve their heritage and keep fresh the memory of achievements and victories of the past. Fortunately they realized at once the need of maintaining their special national holidays and celebrating events of great importance in the history of their people.

In 1874, through the ceaseless efforts of Jon Sigurdsson and his associates, Iceland obtained a charter of self-government in its domestic affairs which provided a stimulus for great rejoicing at the Millennial Celebration (874-1874) held that year to commemorate the Settlement of Iceland. Shortly before this, emigration to America had commenced and that same year a national Icelandic celebration was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In an article in the special editions of Heimskringla and Lögberg for the anniversary celebration at Gimli this year, Dr. S. J. Johannesson cogitates upon the train of thought in the minds of those present at that historic event and very truly interprets their thoughts when he says:

"One can imagine the feeling of pain it must have caused those Icelandic foreigners when their minds, at that very moment, wandered back to the

**F J A L L K O N A N**



Mrs. A. N. Sommerville

mother country; only a short time before they had said good-bye and bid farewell to all and everything — not for the present but for all time to come".

But they did not lose courage. They adopted an attitude to the past and an approach to the future which from that time on has been the guiding principle of the Icelanders of the West. Dr. Johannesson continues:

"They resolved then and there, both audibly and in silence, but mostly in silence, to become self-supporting and handle their affairs in such a way that no shadow or blemish would be cast upon the fair name of Iceland and its people."

The first celebration in America marked the inauguration of many similar events and paved the way for annual celebrations in the larger Icelandic centres. There were, for instance, the fifty-year celebrations in North Dakota and Gimli and the Diamond Jubilee at Lundar, Manitoba. But the annual celebrations, though of a more local and passing character, are equally important and serve the same purpose. These recognition gatherings must not be allowed to drop and must be given all possible encouragement and support.



A celebration of the wider import was held at Gimli on August 6 and 7 last, the occasion being the seventy-fifth anniversary of the settlement of Icelanders on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg. These pioneer settlers arrived there on October 21st, 1875, and called the place Gimli (the home of the Gods in Norse mythology).

In order to provide a basis for an appraisal of the cultural and national value of the celebration in both its Icelandic and Canadian aspects it is nec-

essary to give some details of the programme.

August 6, was a Sunday and a service was held that afternoon marking the spiritual side and the solemnity of both the occasion and the original event. Those conducting the service were Rev. V. J. Eylands, Rev. Runolfur Marteinsson D. D., and Rev. Philip M. Petursson.

The weather was ideal on the day of the celebration and a record number of people attended, estimated between five and six thousand.

The committee in charge very appropriately selected Mrs. A. N. Sommerville (nee Steinunn Stefansson), a second generation settler of the district, to be the Maid of the Mountains (Fjallkonan), and the Misses Esther Hilda Stevens and Margaret Stefania Anderson, third generation settlers, to be her attendants.

On this historic anniversary the government of Iceland sent its special representative to attend the meeting, Palmi Hannesson, principal (rektor) of the college in Reykjavik (Menntaskólinn). He delivered an illuminated greeting from the Government, followed by an inspiring address of his own. The Greeting, teeming with significance, appears on the opposite page, a translation of which, in essence, is as follows:

#### GREETING

To the Icelanders in America  
August 7, 1950

The Government of Iceland sends you, Icelanders in America, sincere greetings and felicitations on the anniversary celebrating seventy-five years of settlement in the new land. At the same time the government and the nation express their appreciation of your loyalty to our language and cultural heritage, your friendship to the people

# KOEÐJA

## til Vestur-Íslendinga

7. ágúst 1950

**P**ikissstjórn Íslands sendir yður, Vestur-Íslendingar, aluðarkvedjue og áruðar-óskir á minningaráðið yðar um sjötíu og fimm ára byggð í himunýja landi. Jafnframt hækkar ríkisstjórnin og öll hjóðin teyggð yðar við tungu vora og menningu, vináttu yðar í gard heimaþjóðarinnar og þá sæmd, er þeir hafið veitt Íslandi með afrekum yðar og orðstir.

Vér vonum, að hin teaustu bónð ættar og sögu tengi oss saman enn um langa hrið.

Lífið heilir !

Reykjavík, 31. dag júlímaðar 1950

Sicíngr Steinþorsson

forsætisráðherra

of the homeland and the honour which has come to Iceland through your achievements and reputation.

We hope that the strong bonds of blood and tradition may unite us for a long time to come.

All Hail!  
Steingr. Steinþorsson  
Prime Minister

Of significance, also, of the wider aspect of the occasion, was the cable which the three delegates from Iceland at the World Peace Conference in Strasbourg, France, sent to the Celebration Committee.

In addition to the formal address of the Maid of the Mountains and the remarks of Palmi Hannesson there were addresses by Dr. Thorbergur Thorvaldson of Saskatoon, Sask. on the Settlement of the District, and by Prof. Skuli Johnson of Manitoba University on the Icelandic Heritage.

Original poems were rendered by P. P. Þorsteinsson, G. O. Einarson, E. P. Jonsson, and Albert Halldorson. Music was provided by local talent: solos by O. N. Kardal of Gimli, and a number of selections by a joint choir under the direction of Johannes Pálsson of Arborg.

The interest of the people of Manitoba generally, in this celebration was shown through greetings extended by Premier D. L. Campbell on behalf of the province, Mayor G. Coulter for the City of Winnipeg, Mayor W. E. Gordon for Selkirk, Mayor B. Egilson for Gimli and Reeve S. Vopnfjord for the Rural Municipality of Bifrost. The representative from Iceland was introduced by Consul G. L. Johannson and Rev. V. J. Eylands chaired the meeting.

Immediately following the programme the Maid of the Mountains laid a wreath at the foot of the cairn

erected to commemorate the arrival of the first settlers. In the evening moving pictures of scenes in Iceland were shown and popular songs, both Icelandic and English, were sung under the direction of Paul Bardal of Winnipeg, accompanied at the piano by Miss Snjolaug Sigurdson of New York. There were field sports during the day, Icelandic delicacies, such as "Skyr" and "vínaterta", were supplied in the dining hall and the festivities closed with a dance.

★ ★ ★

Such was the celebration of the seventy-five years of settlement in the Gimli district. The large attendance; the variety and diversity of programme and activities; a glimpse of the precious past and a gaze into the promising yet fateful future; — it all presents a panorama which must be viewed from the proper perspective if a true interpretation of its significance is to be given. It not only has its cultural and stimulating value for the Icelandic group of Manitoba, but also, because of the very quality of programme and activities, is citizenship building of a high order. No one could leave that celebration without being strengthened in his resolve to serve well in the Canadian scene. No one of Icelandic extraction could but feel an equal strengthening of his resolve to maintain the bonds with the island mother land and preserve the heritage bequeathed by its people.

In that very diversity of programme and in the atmosphere that prevailed throughout the two days of solemn and entertaining celebration a lesson can be learnt which is of value not only to us but to the people of Iceland as well. Reference has already been made to the feeling of loss and final farewell which permeated that first gathering in Milwaukee. If a message had been

sent from Iceland at that time it undoubtedly would have given expression to a similar sense of loss and permanent separation.

It would have been both interesting and instructive, if, following this year's celebration, Dr. Johannesson, or someone else familiar with the events of both the Milwaukee and the present celebration, had given expression to his innermost thoughts as he sought to give interpretation to the events and the atmosphere of the two day celebration. In the absence of competent interpretation the writer makes bold to suggest that it would be something like this:

"At Milwaukee only Icelandic spoken. What a change! The chairman spoke mostly in Icelandic but at times in English. Two sermons were preached at one service, one in English the other in Icelandic; one of the two main speeches in English; two of the original poems in English, all the musical selections Icelandic. The subdued conversation in the audience and the casual greetings during the day were at least as often in English as in Icelandic.

Yes, there has been a change. Yet, in a way there has not been any change. The spirit that prevailed throughout the festive gathering was as genuinely Icelandic as at any other similar event,

even including Milwaukee. One good Scottish-Canadian said he couldn't help being an Icelander that day.

But in one respect there has been a very notable change. In 1874 the sense of loss and parting filled the hearts of all, whether in Milwaukee, elsewhere on this continent or in Iceland. But not so now. No sadness or suggestion of loss; no final farewells. At Gimli all could feel how very close the celebration brought Iceland and its people to us. There was an address from a Maid of the Mountains; it was Iceland's Maid of the Mountains, not ours. A Greeting from the Government and the people of Iceland — not a message of sorrow because of a parting of the ways, but an outstretched hand in gratitude to men and women of the same kith and kin who in their achievements here have done honour to the land and the people of their origin.

And as that outstretched hand is clasped in ours a vision arises of a common mission in the advancement of a common heritage, that the two nations here, that are in the building, may become benefactors with them and with us."

That challenge will at all times keep us close to Iceland.

W. J. Lindal

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## WILLOW POINT

by Frank Olson

On Willow Point the breakers roar  
And roll upon the sandy shore  
Of Gimli's bay, that haven blest,  
The home of Vikings in the West.  
So rolled they when in Seventy-five  
The landing beach became alive  
With pioneers from Iceland's strand  
Arriving in the promised land.

Unto the Point, 'neath heavens gray,  
A strange flotilla weaves its way  
'Mid untold dangers there to land  
Its human cargo on the sand.  
When winter sets in, harsh, severe,  
And closes on this wild frontier,  
The settlers know the doubts, the fears,  
The heartaches of the pioneers.

This people of heroic mould  
Defies the hardships and the cold;  
The many trials that beset  
With Nordic fortitude are met.  
But ere they triumph may secure,  
They near-disasters must endure;  
With steadfast courage they withstand  
The rigors of a strange new land.

What makes their efforts truly great  
They build a state within the state,  
And mould in this fair colony  
A pure and true democracy.

Their industry and enterprise  
Create a western paradise  
Thus farmsteads rise as fortune smiles  
And grace the land for many miles.

Beyond all monetary gain  
They seek their culture to maintain,  
And so transmit from age to age  
A rich unsullied heritage.  
Large numbers from this countryside  
Have spread to regions far and wide;  
From such beginnings has been wrought  
Our country's racial Melting-pot.

On Willow Point the waters roll  
And rouse within our raptured soul  
A faith transcendent as we view  
The Old World pass into the New.  
So as we honor and revere  
The mem'ry of the pioneer,  
We hail, with all at our command,  
The Founding Fathers of our land.

Now three score years and fifteen more  
Have flown away — a fairer shore  
The settlers beckons, one by one,  
As their enduring work is done;  
And when they've gone a grace divine  
Their goodly story will enshrine,  
While heaven's splendour lights the day  
O'er Willow Point and Gimli bay.



Reproduction of a painting by Arni Sigurdson, depicting the landing of the pioneers at Willow Point in October, 1875.

**PROFESSOR SKULI JOHNSON:****OUR HERITAGE**

An address given at Gimli, August 7th, on the 75th Anniversary  
of the Icelandic settlements

Mr. Chairman, Guests of Honor,  
Maid of the Mountain, Venerable  
Pioneers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I deem it a great honor to be asked to speak here once again. It was my good fortune to have a share in the 50th Anniversary and indeed I have been appearing here for over forty years. I still recall my first address in this place; it was the toast to Canada given then for the first time in English. I was much pleased with my performance on that occasion, until I heard a dear old Icelandic lady praise me for having delivered a wonderful poem!

It so happened that on the day on which our Chairman honored me with the invitation to participate in this program, I had been translating an Icelandic Celebration poem by Stephan G. Stephansson. The closing lines of this piece, I shall make the point from which to commence. If to any of you, my treatment may seem to be lengthy, allow me to suggest at least three good grounds for verbosity:

(1) Professors normally lecture nearly an hour at a stretch; so, here with me, habit may prevail.

(2) Speakers are moved to words by a large and goodly audience; I have never faced a more numerous or a more distinguished one.

(3) Orators also are aroused by the excellence of their themes; I have never had a better subject than our Icelandic heritage.

**I.**

You recall how it went, with antiquity flown,  
And the Anses' world burnt and the Flame-fiend o'er-thrown,  
And our earth laid in ruins, — the heavens nine too —  
So the world and the sun had to wax up anew:  
Yet saved there was something on which not the fire  
Could make any headway: gold tablets entire.  
—Here Canada, lapped in the sheltering lea  
Of summer, on sward warmed by sunlight, sit we,  
With similar gain: each remembrance we hold  
Of Iceland is for us a tablet of gold.

— St. G. St. I. 162.

The first part of this stanza alludes to the most famous of the Eddic poems, The Sibyl's Prophecy (*Völuspá*). It is the Vikings' version of Creation, of dissension and doom, and the destruction of the Universe and the Powers, ending with a forecast of a new heaven and a new earth. In it is imbedded the name of Gimli, our Icelandic metropolis:

A hall she sees stand,  
Than the sun fairer,  
With gold covered,  
On Gimli;  
There shall duteous

Hosts inhabit,  
And through life's days  
Enjoy delight.

It is tempting to see in this poem a parallel to the historical experience of Iceland. The organizing and the energizing of the Anses in early days might thus seem symbolically to represent the early years of the Icelandic state. The later and evil days of dissension, as set forth by the Sibyl, would then be equated with the age of the Sturlungs, in which the early republic ended:

Brothers will fight  
And slay each other,  
Sisters' sons  
Their kinship sully;  
'Twill be hard in the world,  
Whoredom great,  
Axe-age, sword-age,  
Shields will be cleft,  
Wind-age, wolf-age,  
Till the world down falls.  
No man to man  
Will mercy show.

Moreover, the dire disasters that overtook Iceland in its servitude down the centuries; the sufferings of Icelandic men from earthquakes, volcanic fires, ice-floes, and recurring epidemics; the injustices and atrocities perpetrated on them by alien powers, whether they were kings or politicians or prelates, — all these could have their equivalents in the details of the *Götterdämmerung* of the pagan poem. Finally, in its new heaven and its new earth, our fancy could discern the reawakening of Iceland and the restoration of its republic, when such a thing, in view of the past, seemed beyond hope.

But this was probably not the direction in which the poet intended to turn our thoughts: he had, I take it, an-

other purpose. He would have us, in our congenial conditions in Canada, contemplate our Icelandic heritage and to be certified of its enduring value. Its importance for America and its permanence, the poet asserts, in a forthright manner, in another celebration-piece:

Though so it prove that silenced  
be our lay  
'Bout burg and steadings, and though  
no one may  
Our tongue remember, to oblivion  
swept,  
Yet something there will evermore be  
kept  
And cherished in your bosom's fost'ring  
care,  
Which will of mind Icelandic witness  
bear.  
So much you need to earn you  
excellence,  
So many things too, of a competence  
To match the profits of prosperity  
And men's aggressive urge of energy.  
Though granted be that gold have  
worth indeed,  
And that a people numbers large may  
need,  
Of assets for a nation to acquire  
The fairest are: the saga and the lyre.

—St. G. St. I. 160

## II.

The Sagas of Iceland and Iceland's poetry are inextricably joined, and the entire history of the country is permeated with the people's irrepressible passion for its language and literature. Indeed until quite recently it has been the Icelandic Sagas, the epic poetry of the Edda, and to a less degree, the other ancient verse that have been known in the outside world. Even for some foreign scholars, these constitute their only first-hand acquaintance with Icelandic culturs.

Many anthropologically-inclined people readily see in Iceland two main racial types: the Norse and Celtic. This has an obvious basis in historical facts. Though the population of early Iceland was bound to be a mixed one, being made up of settlers from Norway and the Western Isles, together with their freedmen and slaves, whose racial origins cannot be verified, the Norse men who went to Iceland by the direct route, imposed their language on the land and predominated in a general way, but assuredly not without the complete accord of their kinsmen, who came by way of the Western Isles with Celts and Celtic influences. Being Germanic, these Norse settlers were men of action; in the main, reticent, who gave their feelings little scope; they were extremely practical, and possessed a clear insight into the importance of a law-abiding society. What this Norse nature could achieve, when Norsemen combined with the Celts of the continent, is evidenced in Normandy, and since the Norman Conquest, is writ large on the political and social history of England, and indeed on the English-speaking world.

### III.

Whether the early settlers of Iceland from the Western Isles contributed to the Icelandic character what are essentially Celtic characteristics (among which the aptitude for poetry is an outstanding one) is still under discussion among the experts. It is however, natural to surmise that such indeed is the case. The Celts of Ireland and Scotland were affluent in feelings and ideals, they readily ran to extremes, and exercised little control over their passions; they lived much in the realm of fancy and day-dreaming. At all events, the idealism of the Celts and the realism of the Norsemen are read-

ily seen in the Sagas and poetry of Iceland.

Nowhere, however, is the merging of these two natures better illustrated than in the political organization of the Icelandic commonwealth: in it was achieved an equipoise between the contending claims of individual freedom and organized society. While the success of the Norman achievements mighty and world-wide was in the massive Roman tradition, the doings of the Icelandic state were on so tiny a scale that their value must be justified before the world much in the same way as the significance of the little democracies of the ancient Greeks. Indeed such societies as those of early Iceland and of ancient Athens make their contribution to the world's assets in precious imponderables. In a world of violence where might is right, such communities, living by reason unsupported by force, survive precariously for a short span. Iceland's early republic was one of those rare adventures of the human spirit to live by intelligence and law in a free society. This it did when the heroic age of untrammeled Viking individualism was ending, and much of the European world was falling under tyranny and taking on the tight fetters of feudalism.

Iceland's political experiment failed in the opinion of the world, but its failure in no sense invalidates it. It succumbed, like that of Athens of old, from causes both internal and external: these commonwealths fell because of faults in their own citizens and by reason of machinations from abroad, made possible by Fifth Columnists. Indeed the overthrow of these two democracies may be compared with the catastrophe in the classical tragedies of the Greeks: in these, essential flaws in the characters of the leading personages, lead in-

evitably to the dread *dénouements* of the dramas. For centuries the tragic failure of Iceland's ideal polity seemed complete, but fortunately the Icelandic people was enabled, in a war-torn world, to achieve a recovery of what appeared to be irretrievably lost.

#### IV.

Our forefathers were the heirs of the Vikings; indeed they were themselves the Vikings of the remotest north. They alone handed down the main ideas and the ideals of the entire Viking race. These are imbedded in the Eddic poetry of the gods and heroes. Hence this body of epic verse, in many ways the antithesis of Homer's, and meagre in bulk, is the greatest antiquarian treasure-trove of all Germanic peoples, and is indispensable for comparative studies in religion and ethics.

The attitude of the pagan settlers of Iceland towards their deities emanated from their notion of their dual nature. Their gods were superior beings, the lords of the universe and the protagonists of the noble and the good. But they were not omnipotent, and they were, like men, subject to change and death. It was a matter of duty and expediency to do them honor by sacrifices, but not in abject servile fashion. The gods were their associates, friends and allies, and for gods and men to exchange benefits and gifts was therefore the most natural and fitting thing to do.

Their views of the gods gave to the Vikings their canons of conduct. From their beliefs they derived their ethics. The basic idea was that they would enjoy a warrior's after-life with Woden, in the Hall of the Slain (*Valhöll*). This suggested that life, both here and hereafter, is an unremitting struggle, and that fighting *per se* is essentially the only sure way of worship. It is to the

great credit of Icelandic men that they abandoned this kind of Woden-worship, which could only satisfy savages, and accepted the gods of sea-faring (*Njörð*), fertility (*Frey*) and strength (*Pór*) and did homage to Woden only in his capacity as the god of intelligence and poetry. And they maintained many of the manly tenets of the best Vikings. Man must show no fear, whatever may befall, one must face fate unbowed, and never give way before great odds. Excessive shows of feeling is unmanly. It is the duty of a man not to do dastardly deeds, he must not employ subterfuge nor fail his friends, he must repay benefits, avenge insults, and have in all matters, a proper respect for his own person and his worth. As the lines in The High One's Lessons (*Hávamál*) phrase it, nothing is to be more zealously sought than a good reputation:

Flocks die,  
die kinsmen,  
dies a man himself also,  
but the repute  
never dies  
for him who has earned him a fair one.

Flocks die,  
die kinsmen,  
dies a man himself also,  
but one I know  
never dies:  
the judgment of each one dead.

Such religious and ethical ideas deriving from Viking sources are found, in unending examples, in the Saga-literature as well, especially in those parts that are commonly referred to as the Icelandic Family Sagas and the Lives of the Kings of Norway. The former go back to the earliest settlement of the country. The earliest law-code of

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# NEW ICELAND 1875-1950

By Jon K. Laxdal

On the sixth and the seventh of August of this year was celebrated at Gimli, Manitoba, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the first permanent Icelandic settlement in Canada. It was appropriate to commemorate this historic event at Gimli for there arrived the first Icelandic settlers of the Canadian west on the eve of October 21st, 1875. This settlement may hence be well regarded as the mother of most of the later settlements which attracted a considerable portion of their original nucleus from the pioneers that made their first Canadian homes at Gimli.

In many respects the story of this colony is both remarkable and unique. At first it was filled with incidents of now little known hardships, want, privations, suffering, sorrow, disease, and despair. Later the dark clouds lifted and for the survivors and their descendants it has become an epic of success and achievements, culminating in the fulfilment and the realization of the pioneers' fondest dreams embodying spiritual welfare, cultural accomplishments, and material success.

New Iceland, as the settlement was originally named, comprised the territory bounded on the south by "Boundary Creek" (just north of Winnipeg Beach), at that time the northern limit of the "postage stamp" province of Manitoba, and on the north by the Icelandic River forty-two miles north along the shore of Lake Winnipeg, while its greatest inland depth was eleven miles. It also included Big Island to the northeast.

Prior to settling at Gimli most of the first group of arrivals had spent a

year at Kinmount and Muskoka, in Ontario, but there was neither suitable nor sufficient land available for permanent settlement, and only casual labor in the lumber mill, on the railroad, or on farms was to be found. The men worked for as little as ten cents a day on farms, and in season the women picked berries to help eke out a meagre sustenance for the family.

At the insistence of the Kinmount group, two men, Sigtryggur Jonasson and John Taylor, were delegated to interview the government at Ottawa to apply for a restricted area for an Icelandic settlement in the Canadian west, for the group wished to form its own separate colony that would accommodate them all, where they could preserve their language, customs and national heritage. The government financed these two men to make an exploration trip to the Red River Valley, and the colonists sent others with them as their own representatives. In all, five or six men made the first westward journey for the purpose of locating a suitable site for the prospective colony. The original intention was probably to locate the colony in the Red River Valley, but on arrival there it was found to be so badly infested with grasshoppers that it gave little promise of suitability for a prosperous settlement. The explorers hence decided to proceed on to the western shore of Lake Winnipeg which reputedly gave promise of offering what the settlers desired. They travelled as far north as Whitemud River, now known as the Icelandic River, where today stands the thriving and prosperous village of Riverton.

The committee entrusted with the selection of the site after due deliberation decided on this territory along the lake as the location for the settlement, for it seemed to meet the most urgent needs of the settlers. The location appeared sufficiently isolated for a separate colony; there was an easily accessible water route to Winnipeg, and it was proposed that the original route of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway then under construction from the east should cross the Red River at Selkirk (then known as The Crossing) and then continue northwestward through the inter-lake territory, thus providing the contemplated settlement with easy access to land transportation. It was a hard blow to the settlement, which seriously retarded its development, when the railway route was changed, for it was not until thirty years later that the first railway reached the colony. Other good reasons for this selection of the colony's site were the facts that the shore was heavily wooded, providing ample building materials, fuel and shelter. The lake was also said to be well stocked with edible and marketable fish. It later proved that this claim was fully justified, and fortunately so, for the fish supply was to a large extent responsible for the survival of the settlers. Fish was not only the staple food, but in many homes the only food on the table for long periods at a time. A further reason advanced for the selection of the site was the existence of rich soil inland. In spite of the low-lying nature of the land and lack of drainage there was ample hayland and pasture indicating suitability for stock raising. It also appeared that here could be found sufficient isolation to preserve and pass on the customs and the language of the homeland.

On their return to Ottawa the men entrusted with the selection of the site reported their findings to the government and sought aid to move the colonists from Kinmount and Muskoka. This request brought unforeseen obstacles, for while the government had authority to attract and help finance immigration to Canada there was no provision made nor precedent set which gave it authority to furnish funds to transplant a colony from one location to another within the country itself. Undaunted, and determined to leave no stone unturned to bring their mission to fruition, the Icelandic delegation sought the assistance of Lord Dufferin, then the Governor General of Canada, for he was known to have great faith in the Canadian West and to be favorably disposed towards the Icelandic people. He had visited Iceland in 1856 and had written of the Icelanders in his book "Letters from High Latitudes" commenting very favourably on their law-abiding qualities, their honesty and integrity. It was finally through his intercession and assistance that the Dominion Government gave the Icelanders exclusive rights to settlement in the Lake Winnipeg area and provided financial assistance for moving the colonists. Further loans were made by the government to purchase provisions and equipment during the period of rehabilitation.

After successfully concluding these negotiations with the government the emissaries returned to Muskoka and Kinmount to make preparations for the journey to the "Promised Land". When the arrangement for transportation had been completed the two groups met at Toronto, whence they travelled by train to Sarnia, then by boat to Duluth where they were joined by a small group which had former-

ly been located in Minnesota. After a short overland journey to Fisher's Landing on the Red River the party boarded the steamer, "International", then plying back and forth on the Red River between Winnipeg and the Minnesota towns located along the river. In Winnipeg, landing was made at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine rivers on October 11. The arrival of the colonists in Manitoba was not without its amusing incidents for many of the Winnipeg residents who had heard of the arrival of the Icelanders, flocked down to the river to see them, quite confirmed in their belief that they would see short, swarthy, stocky individuals not exceeding four feet in height and of course bearing no signs of civilization. The story does not relate whether the inhabitants were disappointed or relieved at what they saw. Perhaps the most reliable estimate of the number of colonists in this group of Icelanders to reach Winnipeg is to be found in "Manitoba Milestones" written by Margaret McWilliams who states that there were 85 families consisting of 285 people. After a five-day stop over required to purchase boats, food stocks, other supplies and equipment for the coming winter, they set out on the last leg of their journey to the colony site on Sunday morning October 17th. The procession of flat-boats accompanied by a York boat was carried by the current to the mouth of the Red River. Here the only steamer on the lake, "The Colville", took them in tow. Although their original destination was the Whitemud River, the captain of the boat, fearing bad weather and formation of ice on the lake refused to complete the trip and left the group in their boats in the lagoon south of Willow Point, three miles or so from the site of the town of Gimli. The im-

mediate prospects were not promising as no preparation had been made for the arrival of the settlers. Before them lay the desolate shore shorn of its summer foliage with leafless trees, withered grass, and further inland, what seemed like an endless and bottomless bog. It was not a cheerful prospect to look forward to the first winter, which later proved to be extreme in its severity. Here, in one of the tents pitched on the shore, was born the first child of the pioneers, Jón Jóhannsson (Jón á Bólstað), a hardy son who spent all his life in the settlement and whose children and grandchildren still remain there.

The most urgent task was the provision of shelter. On the following morning sites were selected and building got under way. The first building erected was a store house for supplies. Other log cabins, mostly 12' x 16', were erected with amazing rapidity in spite of the fact that few of the men were experienced axe-men or builders. Most of the settlers were housed before Christmas. In the meantime, those whose homes were not completed remained in the flat-boats frozen in the ice, or in buffalo-hide tents borrowed from the Hudson's Bay Company and pitched on the shore.

The first winter put the hardy and determined settlers to a severe test. Improper and milkless diet, together with poor housing took the first toll of them in deaths from scurvy and exposure. Some reputedly died from starvation. During the next summer some twelve hundred settlers arrived in the colony direct from Iceland. Thus was formed an almost unbroken settlement along the lake shore from Gimli to Riverton, others settled in Big Island. Further government aid was made to the settlers during 1876. The task of distributing these grants was placed in the

hands of Sigtryggur Jonasson and John Taylor, a duty which they performed in a prudent and equitable manner. The greatest need after shelter and provisions were obtained was that of providing transportation facilities throughout the colony and southward. This work was begun as surveys were made and many men were employed in the building of what became known as the colonization road, which eventually extended from Riverton along the lake shore to join a road already built from the south as far as Netley Creek.

The fall of 1876 and the winter of 1877 was the darkest period in all the history of the settlement. An epidemic of small pox raged through the colony claiming 102 lives, mostly of children and young people. The entire colony was placed in quarantine from November 27th, 1876 to July 20th 1877, with soldiers standing guard at the southern limit of the quarantine area at Netley Creek. Many of the survivors retained their pox marks to their dying day. Grief and anguish more deeply scarred the hearts of those who lost loved ones. During the epidemic a store-house 40' x 16' was transformed into a provisional hospital, and for a time three government doctors were stationed within the colony to relieve suffering and tend the victims.

The most outstanding event within the colony in 1877 was the visit of the settlers' benefactor, Lord Dufferin, who arrived by steamer from Selkirk on September 14th. In a most scholarly address, (which was translated by Friðjón Friðrikson as the Governor-General delivered it), he reaffirmed his high opinion of the settlers, exhorted them to cultivate confidence in themselves and in the prospect that before them lay a bright future in this land of freedom and opportunity. He urg-

ed them to learn as quickly as possible the skill of the axe man, the plow man and the road-builder so essential to successful adaptation to their new environment. He also implored them to preserve their ancient customs and cultural heritage diligently and faithfully for their possible future contributions to the young nation then in its formative stage. This visit, coming as it did, at a time when the settlers needed sympathy, encouragement and inspiration, after a succession of disasters and disappointments, lifted their spirits and gave them new hope and faith in their future. Two other Governor-Generals have since honored the Gimli settlement, with visits, Baron Tweedsmuir in the autumn of 1936, and the Earl of Athlone in the spring of 1945. Both spoke highly of the cultural contribution the Icelanders have made to the Canadian nation.

Even before the most urgent physical needs of food, shelter and transportation had been attended to by the colonists, plans were under-way to provide for some schooling, a church organization and a tentative government. The colonists keenly sensed that without at least some elementary knowledge of English their children would be seriously handicapped in this foreign land. Equally great was their desire to have a church organization with someone to conduct worship, give spiritual guidance, and lead in other cultural pursuits. No less was there desire to establish, as soon as possible, some form of representative government to direct the civil affairs of the settlement.

The settlers had scarcely been housed when the first school was started with Caroline Taylor (a niece of John Taylor) as the teacher. The following year during the quarantine she was the first bride among the colonists. In a

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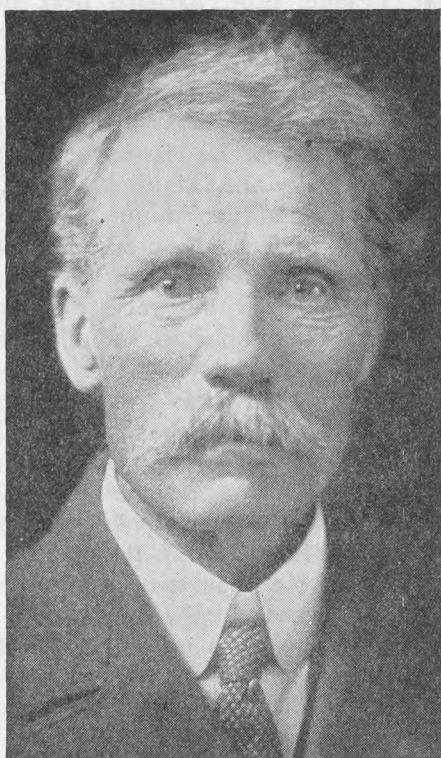
## *The Stephan G. Stephansson Monument*

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has erected a monument in Markerville, Alta., to honour the memory of the Icelandic-Canadian poet Stephan G. Stephansson.

This monument is of the kind known as the Standard monument and Tablet with Inscription and takes the form of a cairn some ten feet in height. These monuments have been placed on various sites across Canada to perpetuate the memory of men and events of special significance in the history of our country. In this case the cairn was built in a public park and playground in the town of Markerville, some three miles from Stephansson's old home. This location is appropriate because the poets' grave, which is in a plot near his homestead, has already been marked by an imposing monument erected by the Stephansson family and Icelandic friends and admirers of the poet.

The men who have done most to bring about this public recognition of our greatest poet are three. Professor Watson Kirkconnell first suggested the idea to the Historic Sites and Monument Board. Professor Skuli Johnson, has for many years worked towards its realization, while Professor M. H. Long, the Alberta representative on the Board, has no doubt been largely responsible for the decision to act on the recommendation received.

The unveiling of the monument took place in the afternoon on Labor Day, September 4, last, in the presence of a very large gathering. The chairman was Mr. Dan Morkeberg, a pioneer of the markerville district and an old and honoured friend of the poet. The next speaker was J. H. Halloway,



**Stephan G. Stephansson**

chairman of the Alberta Provincial Parks Board. He dedicated the new public park which has been named after Stephansson. Then followed the presentation of the memorial by Prof. Long, who heads the department of History at the University of Alberta. He represented on this occasion the government of Alberta and the Historic Sites Board. The unveiling of the memorial then took place. This was done by the poet's last surviving son, Jakob K. Stephansson of Markerville. The well-known Alberta pioneer, Ofeigur Sigurdson read the poem "Fósturlandið" ("Andvökur" Vol. I, p. 179) and spoke a few words about his old friend and neighbor.

Greetings were received from Rev. P. M. Petursson, president of the Icel. Nat. League, Prof. Richard Beck of the University of N. Dakota and the Alberta Authors' Association.

The principal speaker at the dedication ceremonies was Prof. Skuli Johnson, head of the classics dept. of the University of Manitoba. Prof. Johnson stressed the unique position of S. G. S. in Icelandic literature and gave numerous excerpts, in his own translation, from the works of the poet. Prof. Johnson's talk brought the dedication programme to a close.

Further publicity was given to these ceremonies when Professors Long and Johnson broadcast over radio station CBX in Edmonton on the Tuesday following. Prof. Long spoke of the work of the H. S. and M. B. and Prof. Johnson gave a short account of the life and work of Stephansson.

Prof. Johnson was much impressed with the way in which the people of the Markerville district showed their appreciation of Stephansson, and their gratitude for the signal honour that had come to their respected pioneer. The dedication ceremonies were held under the auspices of a local committee headed by Louis Sveinson. This committee not only arranged the programme to the complete satisfaction of all concerned, but went to the trouble and expense of serving a fine lunch to the approximately one thousand people that attended. The business men of Markerville contributed a fine souvenir programme and the community organized a choir of mixed voices that sang, among other numbers, the three stanzas of "Ó, Guð vors lands" from memory—no small feat for a group largely non-Icelandic.

The people of Markerville have earned the deep gratitude of Icelanders everywhere for the manner in which

they have honoured the memory of S. G. S. The action of the Hist. Sites and Mon. Board will be greatly appreciated and thanks are due to its members and all others associated with their tribute to our kinsman.

The inscription on the monument is as follows:

*Stephan G. Stephansson  
Icelandic Canadian Poet*

*Born in Skagafjord, Iceland, on  
3rd. October 1853, he settled in 1889  
in the Markerville district, where he  
lived until his death on the 10th of  
August, 1927. Ranked among the  
great poets of Scandinavian litera-  
ture he endured the hardships of the  
pioneer, and in much of his work  
depicted the life and scenery of  
Western Canada, which shared his  
affection with the land of his birth.*

Stephansson came to America with his parents in 1873 and homesteaded in Shawano county, Wisconsin. In 1880 he moved to Pembina county, N. Dakota and homesteaded there until 1889 when he moved again and took a homestead for the third and last time on the east bank of the Medicine River in Alberta, some three miles upstream from the town of Markerville. There he died on August 10, 1927.

Stephansson's poems "Andyökur", were published in six volumes \*Vol. I. — III. Reykjavík, 1909-10, Vol. IV. — V. Winnipeg 1923, Vol. VI. Reykjavík 1938), his letters and other prose-writings in four volumes (published between 1939 and 1948).

Were one to name six of the greatest Icelandic poets, few would hesitate to include Stephansson among them. His place in Canadian poetry is for obvious reasons more difficult to de-

termine. Prof. Richard Beck in his recent book on modern Icelandic poets places him with the best of the Canadians. This would appear to be a con-

servative statement. Any Icelander familiar with Canadian literature would find it difficult to name his equal.

H. Th.

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## Interesting Visitors

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Dr. and Mrs. Sidney Larson of Canton, Ohio, spent a few weeks in Winnipeg this summer visiting Mrs. Larson's parents and were guests of her brother-in-law and sister, Dr. and Mrs. Donald L. Scott, 375 Cambridge St.

Dr. Larson is a graduate in Medicine of the University of Manitoba, 1929 and after seven years of general practise in Regina, Sask., he took a post-graduate course overseas and then entered Strong Memorial Hospital, University of Rochester, New York where he specialized in radiology, becoming ass't. professor in radiology, and teaching research.

He served as chief radiologist for the Genesee Hospital, a teaching hospital affiliated with the U. of Rochester, and three years ago became chief radiologist at Aultman Hospital, Canton, Ohio, where he is at present doing research in deep therapy for cancer treatment.

Mrs. Larson (Jonina Kristin Olafson) was born at Glenboro, Man., her parents being Jon and Margret (Sigmar) Olafson, now living in Winnipeg. Before her marriage she took nurses training at the Winnipeg General Hospital.

Chatting with the family and with Dr. and Mrs. Scott at their gracious home set far back from the street

among the stately trees and gardens, was almost like meeting old friends. We learned much about life in Canton. Even the children, Joan Margaret, 15, and James Sidney, 10 had interesting viewpoints to expound.

"Of course none of us kids wear long stockings, summer or winter," says Joan, but her mother chimes in perhaps a bit warningly, "No, but you sometimes look mighty uncomfortable with the wind whipping the sleet about your bare knees".

"I wore woolen underwear for a whole winter three years ago", says James. We are intrigued by this bit of information and learn that he stayed with his auntie, Mrs. Scott, until far into the fall that year and she wouldn't let him play outside in "this flimsy stuff they have in Canton", so she bought him some honest-to-goodness woolens. Young James was so taken with this new type of garb he refused to let his mother take it off when he came home.

Mrs. Larson is an enthusiastic member of **The Minute Women of America** a non-political, non-sectarian organization interested in civic improvement and better legislation. Although only recently organized the Minute Women have over 1,400 members in Canton alone.

## *Nordal's Royal Colwood Pottery*

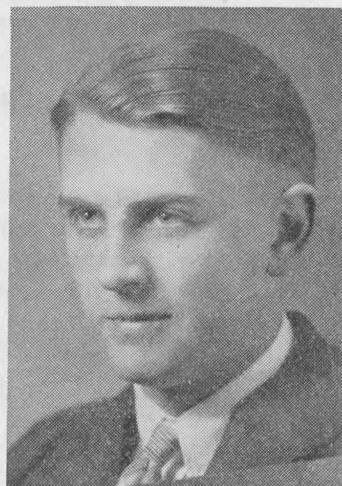
By Holmfridur Danielson

When fifteen-year old Joe Nordal had obtained his special permission, necessary because of his extreme youth, to enter the University of Saskatchewan, he could not have dreamed that one day his own Royal Colwood Pottery, made in his own shop would be sold at the fashionable gift shops of Victoria, B. C.

But twenty years of studying and his innate skill have combined to make him a fine artisan, who can take a shapeless mass of clay and mold it into articles of beauty and elegance.

Johannes Gudmundur Nordal was born in 1913 at Leslie, Sask., the son of Hermann G. Nordal, now of Selkirk, Man., who came from Akureyri, Iceland to Canada in 1904, and his wife Kristjana Elizabet (Borgfjörð). Johannes studied science and engineering at the U. of Sask., graduating in engineering in 1921. Then he became Ass't professor in the department of Ceramics (Pottery) at the University and during this time he studied Sask., clays extensively, leading a group of Canadian geological surveyors on a tour of southern Sask.

In 1936 the government of Iceland asked him to come there to make a survey on non-metallic minerals, such as lime, gypsum and flint. While doing this work in Iceland he became associated with Guðmundur Einarsson frá Miðdal, who was at that time taking the initial steps in establishing his small ceramics shop, which from that time on has flourished and expanded greatly. As a result of Mr. Nordal's survey a paint factory was also established in Iceland.



Johannes G. Nordal

On his way back to Canada Joe, as he is usually called, had the good fortune to spend a short time in the Potteries in England. Now his interest in making fine pottery was really aroused. But a number of things, including the depression, stood between him and realization of his plans.

After scouring all Eastern Canada looking for work he joined the National Sewer Pipe Company of Hamilton, Ontario, where he eventually became Superintendent, and remained with them until 1945. "The name implies a somewhat unglamorous position," says Mr. Nordal, but his work there enlarged his experience and has been a great benefit in his pottery making.

During his ten years with the company he played a part in the building of the first and largest "car tunnel" kiln on this continent for slip-glazing and burning vitrified pipe. The pipe

was placed on small railroad cars and pushed automatically through the fires in the three hundred and twenty five feet tunnel and discharged at the other end. Moving slowly along, its journey took between two-and-a-half and three days.

Nordal now returned to Saskatchewan to manage the Government's Clay Products at Estevan, and in 1947 was offered a professorship at the U. of Sask. But he wanted to launch out on a new venture of his own, that of making fine pottery. Perhaps he had by this time been encouraged by his artistic young Scottish bride, Jessie, whom he married in 1941. She was a nurse before her marriage, but has now become his able and enthusiastic co-worker in the pottery business, doing all the fine painting on the totem poles, rose bowls, jugs and other ornaments that they make at their shop.

So they moved to the west coast, acquired the quaint and old-worldly property at Colwood Corners seven miles north of Victoria, on the scenic Island Highway. There they set up shop, calling their establishment by the impressive name of Royal Colwood Pottery. Their ambitious look into the future became justified as their products caught the public's fancy and they have distinguished themselves by trying to turn out exceptionally good pottery, always keeping in mind the graceful examples studied by Joe in the English Potteries.

Nordal started by building his own kiln of brick at the back of the house and firing it with wood. But since then he has changed to oil-burning equipment. He uses china clay, flint, ball clay and spar, which is a type of rock. "There is very little suitable clay around here", says Johannes, "it is mainly buff or red burning, which

causes flaws and blotches in the ware. We must have white burning clay, free from iron". Some of his clays he gets from Kentucky, Sask., and even England.

After mixing the various types of clay by dry weight he adds water to make 'slip', a thick grey soup which is then poured into the moulds. The proper mixing takes a great deal of skill, as the quality of the finished article depends on the correct balance of the mixtures. The plaster of paris moulds can be used only a few times each as they lose their sharp outline. Each figurine is made by using more than one mould, one for the body, one for the head, and possibly separate moulds for the arms. While the clay is still soft after being removed from the mould, the sections are put together, and all the little details such as flowers or other ornaments are added by hand.

The article is then gently scraped, sanded, sponged and allowed to dry for a week, after which it is fired in the kiln for 8 - 10 hours, which is called a "biscuit burn", and changes it from grey to white. After a second firing the articles are painted by Jessie, then glazed by dipping or spraying. After that comes the final firing which brings them forth all satiny smooth and glowing with color.

Colwood flower bowls have been acclaimed as being better than much imported ware. The warmth and 'glow' of Colwood Pottery has been praised by visitors and customers. And much credit for this must go to Jessie Nordal. To her work she brings a natural flair for creative effort and infinite patience with small detail. Every evening after tucking the two children in bed she takes up her life as an artist, working, usually until midnight at the kitchen table, moulding the delicate clay flow-

ers or deftly wielding her paint brush. Meanwhile Johannes is busy skilfully fashioning such articles as mugs, vases and rose bowls at the potter's wheel.

The Nordal living room is a veritable fairyland of lovely china. Little lifelike figurines of old fashioned ladies curtsey gracefully to gentlemen in powdered wigs, who gravely bow in return. On another table are vases in rose, or green or deep blue, each decorated with a moulded china rose and bud in natural colors. Rose bowls, mugs, ash trays and what-nots are scattered about. Shelves of little figures adorn the walls, and small trays set off ear-rings, brooches and other tiny ornaments.

A new design is always cropping up, as both the Nordals are bubbling over with enthusiasm and originality. As Vancouver Island is so totem-pole conscious, Mr. Nordal has designed a totem mug. He has copied patterns from a totem-pole in Thunderbird Park, Victoria. To please souvenir hunting tourists the Royal Colwood Pottery will burn the name of Victoria Nanaimo, Courtenay, Port Alberni, or any other Vancouver Island city on the

front of the mug. Mrs. Nordal has designed salt and pepper shakers in the form of a rose, and an acorn.

The interesting new venture of the Nordals has not been all fun and fine achievements. They have inevitably encountered disappointments and made mistakes, but these have only served to teach them patience and better methods. Their products have been sold at the Hudson's Bay Co., the Wedgewood Shop, Little and Taylor and the Elysses Gift Shop in Victoria. They also have a considerable mail order business.

Recently Nordal sold his place on the Island Highway and bought property in the city of Victoria, where he is building a larger establishment with fuller equipment. The Nordals feel that there is still a place for the traditional crafts, and there will always be customers who desire to possess individually made pieces.

And important, too, is the fact that together they are creating articles of beauty which will give joy to those who possess them, and they are happy in their work.

## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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## A Students Tribute



Jónas Pálsson

Few communities in this country have a stronger musical tradition than the city of Winnipeg. Our annual musical festival is said to be the largest of its kind in the World. Our public schools have for many years laid the greatest stress on the development of sound musical taste and this in turn has produced scores of talented performers that have made their city known throughout the continent.

Our small Icelandic group has produced its share of musicians and has shown itself singularly generous in giving support to promising artists in this field. Indeed it may fairly be said that musicians are the only people that have received aid, in the form of Scholarships or otherwise, from the Icelandic public.

Among the Icelanders in this city who have devoted their lives to the cause of music, few deserve a higher place than the noted musician and teacher, Jónas Pálsson.

An interesting sidelight on the char-

acter of this remarkable man is found in an article by Dorothy Garbutt, published in the Winnipeg Citizen on March, 26, 1949. The first three paragraphs of this article follow:

"The other evening I saw a film called "Carnegie Hall". It was full of hogum and what Meredith Wilson calls "long hairs". The story was sentimental and inconsequential, serving only to bring the foremost musicians in America before the camera in their best loved performances.

And as I sat and watched the really marvellous closeups of the maestros, the unbelievable dexterity of the artists and the profound charm of Lily Pons and Rise Stevens, the two glamor gals of the opera, my mind went back to the one real musician I had known in my life..

I don't know that he was famous in any way, but he had a local pre-eminence, and parents who wanted their children to have the best in music made sure that he was their teacher. His name was Jonas Palsson; he lived on Wictor Street, for that was how he pronounced it and how I still think of it, and he was born in Iceland. He was short and stocky and of a thoroughly musicianly appearance. His hands were square, the fingers surprisingly short and spatulate. Surprisingly so, because they could span chords and skip around the keyboard, reaching notes at either end with such lightning speed that they seemed almost to be joined by little finger and thumb."

The writer concludes:

"Why Jonas Palsson plugged away at teaching me for all those years, I'll never know. I'd hate to think it was only because my parents paid on the dot. But, if he failed to teach me the

piano—or rather, if I failed to learn—at least he did succeed in teaching me one thing—the love of fine music. For him, Chopin, Beethoven and Lizst were living, breathing human beings, and under his blunt fingers their music sprang to rare and lovely life. Forgetful of the hour's instruction allotted to me, he would sit and play one artist's work after another for me, but mostly for himself. He would talk and explain the passage to me and I would listen and absorb. It wasn't any of your teacher-pupil romances so beloved of Hollywood, for Mr. Palsson was a very much married man, with three darling little girls. But I feel sure that the man realized if he couldn't teach my fingers the intricacies of majors and minors, sharps and flats, at least he could instil in me a love of music. And for this understanding I have a lifelong gratitude."

Jónas Pálsson was born at Norður-Reykir, Borgarfjarðarsýsla, Iceland, on the 29th of August, 1875. He received a fair education in his youth and became a schoolteacher in his home county where he was considered a man of brilliant promise. He left Iceland, however, at the age of 25 and came to Winnipeg, where he soon found an occupation more in keeping with his new status as an Icelandic immigrant and for the next few years he shovelled coal, dug ditches, and studied music in his spare time.

Jónas had begun his musical education in Iceland where one of his teachers was Brynjólfur Thorlaksson who later became well and widely known in the Icelandic settlements on this continent as a choirmaster and organist. After coming to Winnipeg, Jónas first studied under Mr. Mathews, then organist of the old Congregational church. In due course he passed his teachers' examinations in Toronto with high

honours. He then taught music for some years in Winnipeg, but decided on further study and went to England and Germany to complete his training. On his return he had become a musician of great technical competence but it was in the field of teaching, that he had his greatest success and pupils flocked to his studios. Many of these later became outstanding musicians and Jónas came to be recognized as one of the finest teachers in this city.

For a quarter of a century, Jónas Pálsson took a prominent part in the affairs of the Icelandic community in Winnipeg. He was organist in the old Unitarian church and later in the Tabernacle. He also directed various choirs with great success. His interests, however, had a far wider range and he wrote numerous articles on political and religious subjects which were then matters of some concern to our people. Never noted for orthodoxy in either field, he often joined wholeheartedly in those violent controversies that the Icelanders of that day staged with keen relish either from the public forum or in the public press.

Jónas left Winnipeg in the early thirties and settled in Calgary where he continued his teachings. From there he moved to Vancouver where he died on the 4th of September, 1947.

Surviving him were his wife, Emily Helga, (a daughter of the brilliant editor and politician, Baldwin L. Baldvinsson) and five daughters. At least one of these, Miss Alda Palsson of Toronto, has made a career of music. She has won a great many Scholarships and attained general distinction as a pianist. In 1946 while studying at the Conservatory Senior School (Toronto) she won the School's Tuition Scholarship of \$250.00 and a maintenance Scholarship of \$200. (See Icel. Can. Sept. '45 and Winter '46).

H. Th.

## Memorial Museum Opened in Utah

Mrs. Kate B. Carter\*, president of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, was in charge of the ceremonies, Sunday July 23, when the Pioneer Memorial Museum was opened at Salt Lake City, Utah.

Thousands of visitors jammed the halls and ante-rooms of the building and spilled into the roadways and the State Capitol grounds where loud speakers broadcast the proceedings.

High praise for the achievements of the DUP was sounded by all the speakers and special tribute paid to Mrs. Carter who has been the moving force behind the erection of this 'dream of a generation', which proudly stands on Capitol Hill.

Said Governor J. Bracken Lee: "If I ever have an impossible job to do as governor I am going to call on Mrs. Carter to do it".

In his dedication address, Ezra Taft Benson, member of the council of twelve apostles, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said, — "This building is the consecration of ten years of toil and struggle".

Sec'y of State, Heber Bennion, Jr. officially presented the museum, financed largely by state funds, to the DUP for "a period of 99 years". Mrs. Carter accepted the presentation.

The Daughters of Utah Pioneers is a powerful state wide organization whose objects are to preserve Utah history. Their valuable collection of pioneer relics, extensive historical records, manuscripts, photographs, and other data will henceforth be housed

in this magnificent structure which they built in partnership with the State itself.

Mrs. Carter admits that carrying this project through needed considerable perseverance. "We had some big obstacles to overcome", she says. There were prolonged legal entanglements regarding the use of the site on Capitol Hill, and a suit was instituted to prevent the use of state funds for the building". After the satisfactory settlement of these matters the Daughters found that during the delay materials and labour had soared and that the museum would cost more than \$400,000 instead of the \$300,000 originally estimated. The state appropriated \$250,000 for the project, the balance of \$150,000 being raised by the DUP organization. When it looked as if they might not make it the members organized a campaign to sell their ten-volume series of Utah Pioneer History, which has been compiled and edited by Mrs. Carter.

"Our women throughout all our camps responded loyally", says Mrs. Carter, "with the result that we obtained \$37,000 from our book sales alone".

Besides the tremendous amount of organizational work in connection with the building of the museum, Mrs. Carter has, with the help of her assistants, kept up her regular work of assembling and editing the monthly bulletin on Utah history, which is used as lesson guides in all DUP camps. These monthly units grow into the DUP annuals which now comprise 10 large volumes. The 11th and 12th volumes are already outlined for 1951-2. If not busy at her crowded basement office at the State Capitol, "the little lady whose name has become synonymous with

\* Mrs. Carter is the daughter of Finnbogi Bjarnason and his wife Maria Christene Jensen, Utah pioneers. (See article in Icel. Can., Summer, 1947, p. 17.)

DUP", is traveling among the various groups of her organization. For this vast amount of work she receives no salary, only a small allowance for expenses in traveling.

In an article on Mrs. Carter in the **Desert News Magazine**, Salt Lake City, (Mar. 26, 1950), the writer, Ezra J. Poulsen, begins with these words:

"A little girl growing up in Spanish Fork, Utah, learned on her fathers' knee to love the folk tales and sagas he told of his native Iceland, as well as stirring accounts of hardy pioneers coming into the West. Thus fired with an appreciation of history as a cultural and directive force in human affairs, she later became the leader of the most extensive historical project ever undertaken in her state!"

And now this project has become a reality. To Mrs. Carter herself the dedication ceremony must have been a moment of profound personal triumph, but she pays just and generous tribute

to all her co-workers, saying: "It has been accomplished by the loyalty and hard work of 22,000 women organized in 84 county companies and 700 community camps."

"Citizens of Utah and the surrounding states will take great pride in the new DUP Memorial Building" says the above mentioned article. "Its architectural beauty and commanding position will cause the most indifferent person to lift his eyes to higher levels. It seems like the materialization of a long beautiful dream".

"Maybe, the dream began generations ago in the mead halls of the Vikings where deeds of warriors were preserved in song and story. At any rate, it was much alive when the parents of Mrs. Kate B. Carter came to Utah from their homes in Scandinavia; and it reached an effective climax when it became embodied in her crusading personality."

H. D.

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## RECEIVES NEW APPOINTMENT

**Björn Björnson**, Minneapolis, was recently appointed manager of the Northern States Power Company's Information Bureau. This company is one of the largest power concerns in the northern states. His office will be located in Minneapolis, Minn.

Mr. Björnson is born in Minneota, Minn. is the son of Gunnar Björnson of Minneapolis, and the late Mrs. Björnson. He was for a time editor of the Minneota Mascot, then for some years he was assistant editor of a Minneapolis paper, and lately he was a continuity writer of news re. Iceland, Europe and Washington, in Arlington Va.

★

## EMBARK FOR ENGLAND

**Dr. Asa Kristjansson MacDonell** and

her sister **Miss Bertha Kristjansson** left for England recently. Dr. Kristjansson-MacDonell went with her husband Dr. John A. MacDonell. Both will do post graduate work in London.

Miss Kristjansson will spend a holiday in England. They are daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Friðrik Kristjansson, Winnipeg.

★

## RETURNS TO WINNIPEG

Mr. Axel Vopnfjord and his family have returned from the State of Washington, where Mr. Vopnfjord was exchange teacher during the past year. We are very happy to have these fine club members back again with us, and will no doubt be hearing from Axel on his interesting experiences during the year.

## *Musicians Visit Winnipeg*

### **AWARD TO FRANK THOROLFSON**

In recognition of his outstanding achievements in the field of music **Frank Thorolfson** has been awarded a scholarship of \$150.00 by the Icelandic Canadian club. This will enable him to do further research in the field of Musicology, more particularly in 18th Century French Opera.

Mr. Thorolfson is a graduate of the Chicago Musical College having left Winnipeg to study there in 1946. During this period he has twice won the coveted Oliver Ditson Scholarship, and he won also the Chicago Musical College Scholarship in 1950.

He is now on the faculty of the Metropolitan School of Music, in Chicago, with the position of Assistant Dean, and lectures on History, esthetics and score analyses, as well as teaching conducting. He is also editorial assistant and critic for the **Music News**, published in Chicago and widely distributed throughout the continent.

Before leaving Winnipeg, Mr. Thorolfson was conductor of the University of Manitoba Symphony Orchestra and the Winnipeg Chamber Orchestra. He has conducted the Chicago Bach Chorus and is presently organizing two choruses at the Metropolitan School.

Besides his regular work at the school and other duties in the musical field Mr. Thorolfson puts in long hours of concentrated study and research, often working sixteen or eighteen hours a day. When asked if this were not a desperate grind, Mr. Thorolfson says: "I love the work and that makes it easier".

At present Mr. Thorolfson is doing research in rare unpublished music, and he has had a large number of pre-

cious manuscripts photographed, mostly at his own expense, and for his own use. These he finds so absorbing that he could not leave them behind while on a short holiday in Winnipeg in July, but used all his spare moments in diligent study.

Having attained his A.T.C.M., L.R.S.M. (London) and his Mus. B. (Chicago) he is now studying for his Master's degree.



### **HAS PLAYED 79 CONCERTS**

**Miss Pearl Palmason** paid a brief visit to Winnipeg this summer and went to Winnipeg Beach to visit her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sveinn Palmason. Miss Palmason leads a busy life in Toronto, where she is assistant concert master of the Toronto Philharmonic symphony and a member of the first violin section of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, of which Mr. Ernest MacMillan is conductor. Last year Miss Palmason played in 79 symphony concerts as well as engaging in other various musical pursuits.

Pearl does not have much time for concertizing, as there are three hour rehearsals, four times a week, besides the public symphony performances. Not long ago she rehearsed three hours with orchestra, hastened to a solo recital at Kingston; travelled all night back to Toronto, rehearsed again upon arrival and played a symphony concert that night.

Miss Palmason has also played with The Royal Conservatory Quartet; with Alberto Guerrero's Piano Quartet, and has performed violin and piano sonatas on CBC broadcasts with Leo Barkin as pianist.

Miss Palmason started violin study at nine, being a pupil of her brother

Palmi and later studying with John Waterhouse. Before leaving Winnipeg 14 years ago she played in many chamber music programs. She won the Aikins Memorial Trophy at the musical festival and after winning three medals for high marks in examinations of the Toronto Conservatory, she was awarded a three-year scholarship to study with Elsie Spivak.

In 1938 she went to London where she studied with the late Carl Flesch. During her two year period there she visited the Scandinavian countries, France and Iceland, giving a number of recitals in Iceland.

In September, 1948 Pearl gave her New York debut recital at Town Hall, ably accompanied by her friend Snjolaug Sigurdson, and both young artists received unusually laudatory press notices.—(See Icel. Can. Autumn '48).



### PLAYS ON CBC SERIES

Miss Snjolaug Sigurdson has returned to Brooklyn, New York to resume her teaching of music and to continue coaching with Ernest Hutcheson, President Emeritus of the Juilliard School of Music. Snjolaug says that Brooklyn is a very pleasant and interesting community to live in. Musical activities there are highly advanced and she is very active in various aspects of the musical life of the community. In October, 1948 she gave a piano recital at the well known Berkley Institute of Music, some of whose pupils she teaches. And in March, 1950 her New York debut took place in Times Hall. Both these recitals received the warm praise of music critics.

While in Winnipeg during the summer visiting her mother, Mrs. Jona Sigurdson, Banning street, Snjolaug appeared on the CBC Recital Series

which was broadcast from coast to coast. She does considerable concert work in Brooklyn and is planning another New York recital in the near future.



### KARDAL ENROLLS AT COLLEGE

Oli Kardal's musical activities have expanded rapidly since he went to Minneapolis last year to study voice culture. He is now enrolled at the McPhail College of Music and Dramatic Art, where, besides his singing lessons he studies piano and history, and is a member of the school chorus of 180 voices. In visiting us in September, just before returning to Minneapolis Mr. Kardal expressed his warmest thanks to the Icelandic Canadian club for awarding him the scholarship, and for arousing the public's interest in his career. He said it was mainly this factor that made it possible for him to return for further study.

It is most gratifying that Oli's progress has been so rapid during the past year. From various communities where he has been singing this summer we hear the warmest praise of his fine voice. We have received a communication from his teachers Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Manly, saying; in part:

"Mr. Kardal has studied voice with me for the past season and sings with much power and beauty. His voice is truly great and is at its best in the beautiful Icelandic music."

Mr. McPhail, pres. of the School, also writes: "A clear, high tenor voice of good quality, and musical feeling makes up the talent that has been given to Oli. He has appeared in a number of recitals during the past year and has made a fine impression with his fine singing."

H. D.

## IN THE NEWS

### LEIFUR SUMMERS HONORED

This spring, when **Mr. Leifur Summers**, supervisor of Cashiers, City Inspectors, and associated departments, with the T. Eaton Co., Winnipeg, retired owing to ill health and moved to Vancouver, he and his wife were honored by parties and many gifts from friends and business associates. The T. Eaton Company showered him with praise and tribute and most generous and beautiful gifts, so justly deserved by Mr. Summers after 27 years of outstanding service to the Company.

Executives and supervisors gathered at the Summers' residence on Tuesday, April 18, to extend their best wishes. Harold Steele presided and Mr. R. M. Pinfold read a batch of messages of felicitations sent by business associates and friends from London, England to Victoria, B.C.

Mr. R. S. McCordick, general manager, extended to Mr. Summers his personal thanks and that of the Company for an outstanding job over the years. He also expressed the wish of all that in the less strenuous climate of the west coast Mr. Summers will fully regain his health and strength. A replica of a frigidaire was then presented. The original, explained Mr. McCordick to be delivered to the Summers' new home in Vancouver.

A token presentation of a grandfather's clock, the gift of Mr. Summers' staff, was made at his home the following day. The original of this beautiful time piece bears a suitably inscribed silver plate and was also delivered at Vancouver.

We have just received a letter from the Summers' telling us that they are

now comfortably settled in their new home at 7706 French Street.

With his skill in cabinet making (See Icel. Can., Spring '48) and plenty of time for golf and relaxation we feel sure that Leifur will rapidly regain his health, and we know that he and Lil will find new interests and friends, but they will not forget the older ties of fellowship nor the old friends here who miss them sorely.



### RECEIVE DECORATION

Two Manitoba men have recently been decorated by the President and Government of Iceland with the Knight of the Order of the Falcon, in recognition of their contribution to the cultural life of the Icelanders in their community. They are **Gísli Johnson** of Winnipeg and **Arni Sigurdson** of Seven Sisters Falls.

Mr. Johnson was born at Háreksstöðum, Jökuldalsheiði, Iceland, and was graduated from the school at Möðruvöllum, then studied printing. During his many years' residence in Winnipeg he has been associated with the printing business. He is well known for his poetry which has appeared in papers and periodicals in this country, as well as in one volume of verse entitled — "Farfuglar", Birds of Passage,. For the past several years he has edited the annual 'Tímarit' of the Icelandic National League.

Arni Sigurdson was born at Hálsi in Svarfaðardal, Iceland. He has been very active here in dramatics, and his artistic temperament has been evident in his painting of stage scenery and a number of pictures. At the 1948 Spring exhibition of the Manitoba Society of Artists in the Winnipeg Auditorium,

he submitted a painting, called "White Christmas", which won the popularity vote of the visitors to the exhibition. (See Icel. Can., Spring 1948).

His painting in this issue of the Icelandic Canadian depicts his own conception of the landing of the pioneers at Willow Point in 1875. This picture has to be seen in the original to be appreciated as the poetic symbolism of the lowering clouds which greeted the settlers on their arrival is not evident in the cut.



### FAREWELL TO MR. AND MRS. PÁLMI HANNESSON

Mr. and Mrs. Pálmi Hannesson, of Reykjavík, Iceland were entertained at a dinner at the Fort Garry Hotel, August 16, on the eve of their departure from Canada. The banquet was sponsored by the committee in charge of the 75th anniversary celebration of the Icelandic settlements, with the Chairman of the committee, Rev. V. J. Eylands presiding. Mr. Hannesson was the official representative of the Icelandic Government at the Celebration.

Mrs. Hannesson was presented with a corsage of orchids by Miss Dolores Eylands. Mr. and Mrs. Hannesson were presented by Mr. Eylands with a chest of silver from the committee. Other speakers of the evening were: Mr. E. P. Jonsson, editor of Lögberg, Gunnar Simundson of Arborg representing Northern New Iceland on the committee, Mr. B. Egilson, Mayor of Gimli and member of the celebration committee, Rev. P. M. Petursson, president of the Icel. Nat. League and Wilhelm Kristjanson president of the Icel. Can., Club. He presented Mr. Hannesson with a handsomely bound copy of the book, 'Iceland's Thousand Years'.

Mr. Hannesson then delivered a very fine speech and thanked the committee and the community for a very

pleasant visit in this country. Mr. and Mrs. Hannesson had the pleasure of visiting many of the Icelandic settlements while here and on their way south also visited the Icelandic settlements in North Dakota.

Mr. Hannesson, who is Principal of the Collegiate School in Reykjavík is at present visiting several schools and colleges in the United States at the invitation of the U. S. Government. The State Department of the U. S. A. annually invites professors or others in the educational field, from other countries to visit and acquaint themselves with the educational system in the States.

Traveling with Mr. Hannesson is Dr. Alexander Johannesson of Reykjavík who also received this invitation from the State Dpt.



### RECEIVES SUBSIDY

Dr. Richard Beck, professor of Scandinavian language and literature at the University of North Dakota has been awarded a subsidy by the University of Iceland for the purpose of publishing in book form a number of articles which Dr. Beck has written and published in various periodicals, on American and Canadian writers and poets who are of Icelandic descent.

On May 6, Dr. Beck was elected president of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, at its annual convention at St. Olaf College, Northfield Minnesota. This is the second time he serves the society in that capacity, having been president 1940-42.

Dr. Beck gave a paper on "Hannes Hafstein — Poet and Statesman" at the convention, and was guest speaker at St. Olaf College convocation, his subject being, "The Challenge of Today".

**APPOINTED TO UNIVERSITY**

**Prof. T. J. Oleson**, has been named associate professor in the University of Manitoba's department of history. He was formerly professor in history at United College. He is a former member of the editorial staff of the Icelandic Canadian, and is the son of Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Oleson, Glenboro, Man. This spring he received his degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Toronto. \*

**WINS \$3,600 SCHOLARSHIP**

**Glenn LaPorte Johnson**, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, this spring won the District 6 regional scholarship at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. He was a student of Reynolds High School and the scholarship is worth \$900.00 a year and is renewable for all four years of the college course.

The letter giving the scholarship to young Johnson told him that because of his excellent scholastic background, it is expected that he will keep the award through his entire schooling at Princeton.

Glenn Johnson is the son of Mr. and

Mrs. Lynn (Sigurdur Hjaltalin) Johnson, of Winston -Salem. Lynn, a brother of the noted sculptor Jon Jonsson, (see Icel. Can. Spring, '48) is the son of Stefan Jonsson and his wife Holmfridur Hansdóttir Hjaltalin, and was formerly a resident of Upham, N. D. Mrs. Lynn Johnson was formerly Miss Anna Thordarson, also of Upham.

Glenn attended a school in New Jersey during his freshman year and Clemmens High School in his junior and sophomore years, moving to Reynolds High School last year.

His teacher, Miss Mataline Collette, head of the science department at the school also won a \$250 Westinghouse Scholarship to study during the past summer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Cambridge, Mass. \*

#### **ICEL. CAN. FEATURE PUBLISHED IN SUPERMAN**

**Superman National Comics**, in its June-July, 1950, issue has published a condensation of the Icelandic Canadian feature story, **The Enchanted Coach**. It is run on the inside of the front and back covers of the comic magazine and is entitled, 'Boys who never give up' with a sketch at the top of the story showing Joseph Olafsson busily at work making his Napoleonic coach for the Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild contest. Stories of this nature published in **Superman** are for the purpose of arousing the ambition of boys and spurring them on to do some constructive and creative work.

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The number of households in Canada has increased. The estimated number of families in Canada in June 1948, was 3,088,000—an increase of 46,000 over June of 1947.

The average size of family in 1948 was 3.8 persons as compared with 3.7 in 1947.

## Icelandic Canadian Club News

The annual meeting of the Icelandic Canadian club was held June 19, at the parlors of the First Federated church. The president Mr. W. Kristjanson was in the chair.

Reports on the various projects of the club were given by Mrs. H. F. Danielson, on the Icelandic Canadian Magazine, The Icelandic Chair Fund and The Scholarship Fund; Mr. H. F. Danielson, Circulation manager for the Magazine; Mrs. Grace Thorsteinson, business manager for the Magazine; Mrs. B. S. Benson, resolutions committee; Miss Mattie Halldorson, secretary; Miss Villa Eyjolfson, treas.; Mrs. Runa Jonasson, Social committee; and by the President W. Kristjanson, and vice-president, Mrs. Kay Palmer.

These reports showed that:

To date the club had contributed \$800.00 of its thousand-dollar pledge to the fund for the Icelandic Chair at the U. of M.

A scholarship of \$150.00 was awarded by the club to the outstanding musician, Frank Thorolfson, which will enable him to pursue research in 18th Century French Opera. Mr. Thorolfson is Ass't Dean of the Metropolitan School of Music, Chicago, and is also completing his course for a Master's degree in Musicology.

An additional scholarship award of fifty dollars was made to Mr. O. N. Kardal who has returned to Minneapolis for further vocal training. This was made possible by a very generous contribution to the Scholarship fund from the Gimli Women's Institute. Scholarships to the total of \$1,600.00 have been awarded from the fund in the four years since its inception.

Mr. Danielson reported that over 100 new subscribers had been added

to the Magazine list during the year. An honorarium of \$250.00 was presented to him for his exceptional work on the Magazine, which he has carried on for eight years since the Magazine was launched.

Mrs. Danielson reported that the news contacts of the Magazine have widened rapidly during the last three years, and that she is now in contact with persons in every part of this continent, who send in items on noteworthy current events or outstanding personalities. The work of assembling this mass of material entails a tremendous amount of time and energy, she admitted, but is well worth the trouble and painstaking care, as the magazine is steadily recording for posterity historical material on the activities of the Icelanders, much of which would otherwise be completely lost as it is not published elsewhere. A fine array of talented writers have given their whole-hearted support to this voluntary venture and readers tell us that they feel the magazine has succeeded in reaching a high standard of literary excellence.

During the eight years of its existence, 198 articles have been published in the Icelandic Canadian, on Icelanders in Canada and U. S. A., and their descendants. The historical articles on the pioneer districts have been carefully compiled, and co-ordinated, not only from existing published sources but have also required a great deal of original research, and thus make a most comprehensive study.

A record of over one thousand service men and women who served in the last war has appeared in the magazine and altogether it has published to date 1340 pictures.

To afford the younger generation a glimpse of Icelandic poetic genius and to help cultivate their talent for its enjoyment the magazine has carried a large number of fine Icelandic poems with good English translations. The magazine has also contained a number of original stories, thirty-eight informative articles on Iceland and a variety of articles of a general nature.

Scores of letters have been received by Mrs. Danielson during the last two years from subscribers voicing their appreciation of the valuable contribution that the magazine, and the club itself is making to the cultural life of the Icelanders in this country and for this highly effective method of perpetuating the Icelandic heritage and communicating the richness of its culture to the descendants of the pioneers, especially to those who are no longer able to read the Icelandic language. Through the pages of the magazine, through the lectures given at the Icelandic Canadian Evening School and the publishing and distributing of the book, "Iceland's Thousand Years", the club has succeeded in doing most outstanding work. This is the consensus of opinion of our readers who have sent in communications.

Close to 2000 copies of the book have been sold, and the club's funds, including the general fund, Magazine fund, Scholarship fund and the book fund, now amount to \$2,445.45 in spite of the club's generous spending on worthy projects during the last few years.

The club held a successful dance at the Marlborough hotel in January. It is planned to make this an annual affair.

An amateur concert was held where a number of talented young people and children had the opportunity of performing for the public. Guttormur

J. Guttormsson, eminent poet was presented with an honorary life membership in the club at a very enjoyable concert in the Federated church in November last. These and other social activities of the club have been reported in previous issues of the Magazine.

The slate of officers for the coming year:

Past pres., Axel Vopnfjord; president, W. Kristjanson; vice-pres., J. K. Laxdal; Recording sec., Mattie Halldorson; Corresponding sec., Mrs. L. Robinson; Treas., Vilborg Eyolfson; Executive committee: Dr. L. A. Sigurdson, Paul Bardal, MLA, Mrs. B. S. Benson, H. J. Stefanson, Walter Larusson, Kay Palmer, Holmfridur Danielson. Social committee: Mrs. Runa Jonason, Convener, Helga Eggertson, Inga Johnson, Gerda Narfason, Mrs. L. Olsen, John Myrdal and Andres Bjornson. Membership committee: Mrs. Lena Richardson, Miss S. Eydal, and H. F. Danielson.

Mrs. H. F. Danielson was re-elected as head of the Editorial staff. Other members of the Magazine committee were also re-elected. They are: Editorial Board: Judge W. J. Lindal, H. J. Stefanson, Heimir Thorgrimson, and J. K. Laxdal; News editors: S. Eydal and Margret Petursson; War Service Record: Miss Mattie Halldorson; Circulation manager: H. F. Danielson; Business manager: Mrs. Grace Thorsteinson.

The social committee was in charge of an interesting program following the business meeting, and refreshments were served.



#### ENA OPENS SHOP

Our energetic and ambitious Ena Anderson has at last realized her dream of having a business of her own to run. This summer she opened up **The**

**Princess Shop**, a clothing shop at 3474 Broadway, Vancouver. Ena has sent us a gay little circular which invites the public to "come in and meet the new owner and operator, Mrs. Ena S. Anderson, and to inspect the stock of Men's, Women's and Children's Wear, offered at reasonable prices". The shop also offers dry cleaning service to its customers, and we may be sure that they will receive courteous and efficient service from Ena. Before moving in she and young son Carl were very busy painting and decorating the shop and the adjacent living quarters. Congratulations and best of luck, Ena!



#### **GISSUR ELIASSON GETS UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENT**

The appointment of **Mr. Gissur Eliasson** as instructor and Registrar of the newly established University of Manitoba School of Arts was recently announced by Dr. A. H. S. Gillson, President of the University. Mr. Eliasson had formerly held a similar position with the Winnipeg School of Art, where he had through long association and service, had opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the various aspects of local instruction and the particular needs of the individual

students in the field of fine and applied art.

Born in Winnipeg, Mr. Eliasson received his public and high school education at Arborg where his parents had taken up residence. This schooling was augmented by a year at the Jon Bjarnason Academy. Having shown some artistic talent and a restless creative energy throughout these school years, Gissur's aspirations crystallized more and more around art. On being shown some of his youthful drawings, Mr. Charles Thorson, the well-known commercial artist, took a personal interest in this work and offered to give private tuition in his studios. After a year of intensely interesting study with Mr. Thorson, Gissur entered the Winnipeg School of Art, where he commenced the formal art instruction provided in the three-year Diploma Course.

On graduating he was engaged as an instructor and Registrar. With increasing hours of instructional duties alongside an expanding practice of free lance commercial assignments, Mr. Eliasson has acquired experience that should and will stand him in good stead in his new position.

Gissur served on the Editorial Board of the Icelandic Canadian for two years.

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## **Capt. J. B. Skaptason**

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This magazine does not publish obituaries. It seeks to record the achievements, if they be special, of the Icelandic group in America, and particularly to point out distinguishing features in the lives of individuals which are of such a character that they might be of value and a guide to others. It is therefore of little moment whether

the person mentioned is still with us or on the other side.

The late Captain Joseph Bjornson Skaptason must be included and on both grounds. In deference to one who has departed his own achievements will be mentioned first but the distinguishing features of his home life are something which will remain long after

individual accomplishments have been forgotten.

Joe Skaptason was born in Iceland in 1873. Ten years later he migrated with his parents to Canada. As a young man, anxious to make good, he accepted almost any kind of work. Whatever he undertook to do was always done well. It soon became known that he was one of the type who desired to do more than



Captain J. B. Skaptason

merely perform allotted tasks. He gave thought to his work, became interested and soon was making suggestions to his employers. Advancement was rapid and by the turn of the century Joe Skaptason was given a responsible position in the office of the Provincial Secretary of Manitoba. This position he held until 1915 when he volunteered for service in World War I and proceeded overseas with the rank of Captain. He returned to Canada in 1919 and in 1921 the Dominion government appointed him Chief Fish Inspector for Manitoba. Again he showed that same determination to do more than merely

perform official duties. He was equally interested in the conservation and propagation of fish as he was in the preventing of violations of regulations. He visited the main lakes of Manitoba and obtained valuable information in regard to all phases of the fish industry in this province. He was particularly interested in the presence of cysts in Manitoba fish, and the problem of their ultimate removal. The conclusions he reached in his exploratory work were put in book form and formed the basis of further governmental research and investigation.

Joe served as Inspector of Fisheries, first for the dominion and after 1930 for the provincial government, until 1940 when he was retired after having been in public service for thirty nine years.

Though a good Canadian, Joe was keenly interested in all matters of interest to the Icelanders. He was a strong supporter of *Heimskringla* and for a while was general manager. He was a firm believer in the usefulness of this magazine but was a little sceptical of its future because he feared that sufficient voluntary talent would at times not be available.

It is customary when a reference is made to the achievements and qualities of mind of a man to add, as a sort of a footnote, that he had married and give the name of his wife. In this instance, that practice cannot be followed. The lives of Joe Skaptason and his wife were so harmoniously and happily woven together that in much of their work and in everything which set a distinguishing mark on their home it is impossible to designate the contribution of each. And no effort will be made to do so here.

In 1901 Joe Skaptason married. His widow has, during the years, through

her own unselfish service and in partnership with her late husband, become so well known and won such a special place in the hearts of all who know her, that one is tempted to become Irish and say that Joe married Mrs. J. B. Skaptason. Suffice it to state that her maiden name is Johanna Gudrun, and that she comes of a gifted family being a half sister to the late Valtyr Guðmundsson who was professor at the University of Copenhagen and founded the leading quarterly in Iceland, *Eimreiðin*.

There are few traits which Icelanders possess in fuller measure than that of hospitality. That is but natural and reasonable and has two reasons behind it. Travel was difficult as there were mountains to cross and rivers to ford, so a visitor was always welcome as it was assumed that he needed sustenance and rest. The Icelanders are inclined to intellectual pursuits and the personal element did not count for as much as the cultural treat that such visits provided.

Joe Skaptason and his wife were deeply endowed with this special trait. Joe has gone, but that joint hospitality still remains. It found expression in much more than a pleasant smile, the inevitable refreshments such as coffee, Icelandic delicacies and very often Joe's favorite dish, smoked sturgeon. Both had the gift, which they combined so beautifully, of reaching into the heart of the visitor and making him feel perfectly at home. This was true throughout their happy married life, but at no time more so than during the first world war when they were stationed in England. Their home was open to all Icelandic soldiers whom they could reach, and to many others. To

those returning from the front, it was a haven, rest, comfort, cheer, encouragement. To some of them it was a last visit. It gave comfort to Joe and his wife, when they read the casualty lists, to know that they had provided a few hours of happiness to these heroes in their last leaves from the front.

Mr. and Mrs. Skaptason were (I can only speak of them as one) of the Unitarian faith and were stalwart supporters of the Federated Church in Winnipeg. Joe served for a while as president of the congregation and Mrs. Skaptason was for many years one of the ablest workers in the various organizations of the church.

In all happy marriages the husband is equally as interested in his wife's work as she is in his. This was very true of Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Skaptason. Only one illustration need be given. Many hundreds attended the Welcome Home Reception given by the Jon Sigurdson Chapter of the I.O.D.E. and The Icelandic Canadian Club to the returned men of the second world war. All who were there will remember, as long as they live, the grace and charm with which Mrs. Skaptason presided at that magnificent reception. But only a few of those present knew the anxiety of her husband that she perform her duty well. So anxious was he that it caused him physical pain, but yet he would not have it otherwise. This instance gives a new meaning to the words of Tennyson where he says that marriages are made in heaven.

This happy partnership in love and service came to an end, but it will never be forgotten by the host of friends who were privileged to know Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Skaptason.

W. J. L.

## OUR HERITAGE

(Continued from page 16)

the Icelandic commonwealth Graygoose (*Grágás*), embodies also many of them. So too, does the Scaldic poetry.

### V.

Among the earliest settlers of Iceland only a few poets are known, but presently there sprang up in the island a mighty crop of bards who all kept up the Eddic tradition. These soon became the favoured and indeed the only bards of sovereigns in Norway, Denmark and the Orkneys. The chief Norwegian work of the 13th Century, the *Speculum Regis* (*Konungsskuggsjá*) asserted that three causes account for faring abroad: "emulation and fame, curiosity, and the acquisition of wealth". Icelandic men, especially in their younger days, would go abroad to seek "fame and furtherance". The easiest way for a gifted Icelander to attain this was to compose on the exploits and the qualities of the king or earl he intended to visit, a poem of praise, and to recite it to him in his hall before his assembled court.

This is no place to enter upon a survey of the prolific writings of these Scalds, with whom indeed, it has been remarked, the making of poetry became as it were a national industry. Much of this kind of verse is so intricate in its metaphorical periphrases that it is not fully understood even by Icelanders themselves. Yet it has in its corpus some of the masterpieces of the literature which are entirely admirable in matter and form. For history, linguistics and for the culture of Iceland these difficult poems have an immense importance. It is significant that they left a deep mark on the religious poetry down to the Reformation in Iceland. The poetry of the last Catholic Bishop of Iceland Jón Arason, (the fourth

centenary of whose martyrdom falls on November 7 of this year) is not uninfluenced by these ancient forms. The ballad-poetry of Iceland (*rímur*) and the Icelandic quatrains (so common that it is believed that every Icelander can correctly fashion them) owe much too, to these antique metres.

### VI.

The men of Iceland maintained the Viking tradition of sea-faring. They regularly, during the entire period of the commonwealth, travelled the sea-lanes that led to Scandinavia, Denmark and Britain. Their discovery of Greenland, which they colonized, and of America (*Vínland*), which they failed to hold, are outstanding evidence of their intrepid navigation. That they succeeded in doing this is really astonishing, when we realize that they had neither compass nor charts, and when we consider the nature of their ships. These were tiny, normally about 50' in length, 16'-17' wide, manned by 20-30 men, and capable of carrying 40 tons. Each of them had a single mast and a single sail, and its helm was an oar curiously attached to the right side of the vessel at the back. *Grágás* has some interesting points pertaining to marine law, dealing with such matters as: the removal of gaping figures on the prows of ships approaching Iceland, harbor-toll for the owners of the shore land, rental for mooring ships, and assistance to be given merchantmen, and last but not least, the schedule of prices an overseas merchant could charge for his wares in the district; (the local assembly was to settle these.)

### VII.

Adam of Bremen (ca. 1075) in amazement wrote of the government of Iceland, the familiar expression: *Apud illos non est rex, nisi tantum lex* — ("Among them, there is no king save

only the law"). In their fear of centralization and their ardour for independence, the men of Iceland set up no executive with physical power to enforce its administrative authority. Instead they relied on agreement, on laws, on personal participation in functions of government, on harmony between the priest-chieftains (*Goðar*) and their voluntary liegemen (*þingmenn*). These ends they obtained through assemblies, meeting in various districts in the spring and fall, and in the annual meeting of Alþing for two weeks in the summer. For certain minor business, they availed themselves of smaller county or municipal units. There is much in all these arrangements that remind one of the Athenian democracy with its assemblies, courts and demes, and much in the significance of Alþing that is paralleled by the great national festivals of the Greeks, especially those at Olympia.

Iceland was discovered by the Norsemen in 874 but as early as 825 (according to writings of the Irish monk Dicuil) it was visited by Irish ascetics. Within sixty years of settlement the population of the country grew to be 60–70,000 and in 930, Alþing, the national assembly at the Plains of Parliament (*Þingvellir*) was inaugurated and the laws of Ulfþjótur (based on those of *Gulapíng* in Western Norway) ratified. After the political experience of thirty-five years Alþing enacted in 965 a series of important matters: the legislative and judicial functions of Alþing were separated. Quarter Courts were established (soon to be held at Alþing) and the number of chieftains possessing political power was definitely fixed. In 1000, Christianity, by one of the finest instances of compromise known to history, was officially made the religion of the land. In 1004, the so called Fifth Court was

set up, to do away with the impasse reached in the lower courts, to hear appeals from them, and to eliminate holm-going as the method of settling disputes. When the county or municipal organization was set up, is unknown. A unit was made up of 20 or more freehold landholders: these chose a committee of five to deal with certain cases in their locality such as those of default, and the maintenance of the indigent. These municipal units also had a sensible system of cooperative insurance against losses on houses or on stock.

### VIII.

After 965 there were thirteen district assemblies (*þing*) in the country; three in the East, South and West Quarters, and four in the North. In these, the main business transacted by the three local chieftains and their voluntary clients, was to prepare, at the spring session, matters for Alþing, to sit as a court on local cases, and to settle debts within the district. The local assemblies could legislate on purely internal matters but no decision reached might vary from existing regulations of Alþing. These assemblies met again after Alþing, also at a fixed time, to receive notice of the transactions of the national assembly. Though every ninth man of his lieges could be required to attend Alþing with his chieftain, there were many who would not know what their government had done and they were entitled to be acquainted with all matters of such sort in an official way. The law of 965 also ordained that there should be three main temples in each þing, but the payment of toll to these was optional, and every one could have his own sacrificial altar at his own home. The Catholic Church in Iceland, was, in the early days, like the government of the land, adapted to the needs of the country, and closely

linked up with rural life. Indeed it could not be otherwise, since at this time there were no towns or cities in the land.

#### IX.

Shortly after 965, the Quarter Courts were instituted annually at Alþing. Nine members for each of these were nominated by the full-fledged chieftains, one by each in three quarters, but in the North Quarter Court, the twelve chieftains named in agreement their panel. The speaker-at-law decided the place and the legislative body (*lögréttu*) the time for the courts at Alþing. Any male, twelve years or over, capable of speech and competent to take an oath, free, and of a fixed abode, was eligible for membership in a Quarter Court. These courts heard cases from the district assemblies or cases coming up for the first time. A quorum was six and verdicts had to be unanimous. The prosecution of every kind was personal, oral and based on evidence adduced by witnesses, verifiers, and panels (*kviðir*). All evidence was given under oath and there was here, as elsewhere, the strictest adherence to procedure. Under some circumstances, men in their oath, declared their citizenship forfeit, if their evidence proved false.

#### X.

The Fifth Court entailed the appointment of twelve additional chieftains, who were to name a dozen men to the three doz. nominated by the full-fledged, thirty-nine chieftains, to form the panel. As never more than three dozens were to give a verdict, the group judging was reduced to that number, by an ordinance that the prosecutor and the defendant must each challenge six jurors. This was a regular appeal court and a majority vote in it sufficed to settle an issue. If a tie resulted in re-

ference to a divided decision from a lower court, the matter was dealt with by the casting of the lot; in other cases of fines, a tie-vote was taken as a confirmation of the penalty.

#### XI.

The only executive officer of Alþing, was the speaker-at-law (*lögsögu-maður*). He was elected for a term of three years and was eligible for re-election without limit. His main function was to recite the laws of the land from the Rock of Laws (*Lögberg*), finishing his recital in his three years. He declared at each session the proper legal procedure, and announced publicly all legal modifications as they were made by the legislative body (*lögréttu*) in which he sat. He could at any time inform questioners at the sessions of Alþing or at other times about the laws but he could settle no cases. He could, with the tacit consent of the legislative body, abrogate laws by omitting them from his recital three years in succession. He could consult persons wise in the law without fee. He himself received as a stipend two large hundred (i.e. 240) ells of Icelandic cloth (*vaðmál*) and half of such penalties as were imposed at Alþing.

#### XII.

The legislative body was in a sense sovereign; before it had to come all special pleas and petitions, e.g. for acquittal from a legal judgment involving out-lawry, for change of venue of district meetings in a þing, or personal requests. All such requests had to receive the unanimous consent of the body and of all persons present. A single dissenting voice from any quarter sufficed for a veto. The legislative body could be called upon to give a verdict on stated cases but the consequence of the verdict rendered was not

enforceable at law. This was apparently a survival from the Norwegian assemblies in which the legislative and judicial functions were not differentiated.

In composition and in functioning it was a peculiar combination of aristocratic and democratic elements. The seating arrangement of the legislature was in three circles; in the middle one sat the thirty-nine full-fledged chieftains and nine others selected from the East, South and West Quarters. These alone could make proposals and vote on them. Each of these forty-eight legislators had two advisers sitting in front and behind him, with whom each chieftain discussed the matter in hand before voting upon it. The speaker-at-law sat with the legislators, and later also, the two bishops of Skálholt and Hólar.

The body met in three regular sessions during Alþing. But extra sessions were called at the summons of the speaker-at-law at the wish of the majority of the legislators and even at the request of men present at Alþing, who were not members of the legislative group. Voting on the part of members was compulsory; a failure to comply with this might entail a money-fine of three marks, forfeiture of chieftaincy, or even a more severe penalty. In the legislative group a majority decided the issue; in cases of a tie, the speaker-at-law cast a vote.

The law-code of the ancient commonwealth was, after deep consideration by men versed in the laws, committed to writing in the winter of 1117-1118 (**Hafliðaskrá**). Several copies were made. In case of disputes about variant readings, those lodged at Skálholt and Hólar were to have precedence; if these varied, the one at the older see, Skálholt, was to prevail.

### XIII.

Aspects of Iceland's early commonwealth, have engaged my attention, but assuredly the tale of the country's golden age cannot be too often told. In its soil are deeply imbedded the tenacious roots of Iceland's national tree of culture and intelligence, and the second republic of Iceland that has essentially sprung up from those roots, promises to be a kind of novel Ash tree of Woden (**Yggdrasils askur**). At all events Iceland, in the spirit of the Vikings of old, is entering into the efforts of the United Nations to win peace for the world. And like the Sibyl aforetime, Iceland visions, after the wreck and ruin of the old world, the advent of a new and better one:

A hall she sees stand,  
Than the sun fairer,  
With gold covered,  
On Gimli;  
There shall duteous  
Hosts inhabit,  
And through life's days  
Enjoy delights.

Then too will come to pass another prophecy of the Sibyl to which Stephan G. Stephansson alluded in the verse cited at the outset:

Then will anew  
Golden tablets  
Wonderful  
Be found in the grass,  
Which in early days  
They had possessed.

But not perhaps in the way in which the poet envisaged it. When Stephan G. Stephansson was writing his poem almost half a century ago, he did not foresee that in this year, the 75th Anniversary of the Icelandic settlement, less than a quarter of a century after his

death, he would be receiving recognition, regional and national, for the golden tablets of his poetry. Nor could he surmise that then too, a dream, long-cherished, would be approaching realization: the establishment of a Depart-

ment of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba, to preserve indefinitely for our fellow Canadians and ourselves, his and all the other golden tablets of our Icelandic heritage.

## New Iceland 1875-1950

(Continued from page 20)

ceremony conducted at Netley Creek the bride and groom, Sigurdur Kristoferson, stood on the north bank of the creek while the minister, a part Indian, read the marriage ceremony from the south bank separated from them by the quarantine line. Only casual instruction was provided for the next winter, but during the winter of 1878-79 schools were conducted both at Gimli and Riverton.

The first schools that really provided general instruction in English were two schools begun by the late Gudni Thorsteinson, one at Gimli, the other near Sandy Hook. These started in 1885 and instruction was given at both by Mr. Thorsteinsson for a period of three months at each, and continued the next year until he was elected secretary for the colony. The parents of the children attending school were required to pay a tuition fee of fifty cents per month per child, but many were unable to pay even this small amount. Other schools were operated prior to 1888 at Riverton and Big Island. In the year 1888 some school districts were formed throughout the more populous districts of the colony and organized public schools came into operation as conditions demanded, functioning under the Manitoba Educational Act. The school districts of Gimli, Minerva, Kjarna, Arnes, Hnausa, Geysir, Riverton and Big Island were among the earlier ones to be established.

The early church life in the colony played an important part in the future destiny of the settlement. Two influential men, Rev. Jon Bjarnason and the Rev. Pall Thorlakson, both endowed with excellent qualities of leadership, but with somewhat different religious views formed the first church organizations in the district. Their respective followers were soon divided into opposing factions and the religious controversy that followed became a bitter struggle which was one of the many causes that led to extensive migrations from the colony to other parts of Canada between the years 1878 - 1886, particularly to North Dakota, the Glenboro district, Churchbridge and Winnipeg. Other factors that hindered progress and influenced the colonists to leave were lack of profitable employment and the near impossibility of marketing produce, particularly fish and cordwood, so that of almost two thousand settlers that had moved there in the first years only some two hundred remained at the conclusion of the exodus. The largest remnant was concentrated at Riverton where a sawmill had been established and employment was available. During the 1890's an influx of settlers arrived and by 1900 the population again reached the two thousand mark. At the turn of the century settlements began to form at Arborg, Geysir, and Vidir. The turning point towards

real progress within the settlement was construction of the railroad to Gimli in 1905, and its later extension to Riverton in 1914.

The most unique and remarkable portion of the story of the earliest pioneers is to be found recorded in the earlier editions of the first paper printed in the colony, 'Framfari' (The Progressive) which relates in minute detail the establishment of their own local self-government.

This is a story which has no parallel in Canadian history, for here, in the midst of the Canadian west, the colonists set up a virtual sovereign state, in the form of a democracy or a republic, having its own constitution and a code of laws complete to the last detail respecting the management of its affairs of government, outlining the duties and responsibilities of its citizens toward their community and their fellowmen. Here the elected representatives of the colonists held their assembly, debated and solved the problem of the state in their own foreign language with the full sanction of the Dominion Government, whose encouragement and financial assistance had made this colonization venture possible.

During the early period, when the most important considerations were the provision of shelter and sustenance, and the period following this, when the small pox epidemic threatened to wipe out the infant colony, a temporary committee of five men was elected to tentatively administer community affairs. In January 1877, two meetings were held, one at Riverton, the other at Gimli. At each meeting five representatives were elected for the purpose of drafting a code of laws to administer the colony. The committees acted independently of each other. Later the representatives of the two com-

mittees met jointly at a general meeting to frame the constitution.

For the purpose of administration, the colony was divided into four districts, Víðinesbygð, Árnesbygð, Fljótsbygð, Mikleyjarbygð, each of which chose five councillors. In each group one member acted in the capacity of president of his district council. The four district presidents formed a general council for the entire settlement. The constitution was most progressive considering the time and included provisions for almost everything in legislation that a young democratic state could desire. Time and manner of elections were specified. The franchise was granted to all gainfully employed men of good character who had passed their eighteenth birthday. Eligible for public office were all men over the age of twenty-one years with the exception of permanently employed school teachers and ministers of the gospel. The duties of officials were faithfully kept in five separate books designed by number. Book 1. contained the minutes of all official meetings; Book 2, census figures, economic status, and progress; Book 3, records of road building and improvements; Book 4, vital statistics covering birth, marriages and deaths within the colony; Book 5, records of land transactions, land valuations, etc. Inspections and audits of these books where necessary were made each year. Provision was made from tax revenue for roadbuilding, charitable relief, and support of widows and orphans incapable of self-support. Every resident man over the age of twenty-one years of age was required by law to contribute two days of ten hours each for roadbuilding or in lieu of that pay two dollars for each such day that he did not work. Each elector also paid an annual fee of twenty-five cents to a general district fund. The

four separate districts were responsible for their own roadbuilding program as well as all matters pertaining to health, sanitation, and fire protection, and the provision of capable administrators for estates of minors. Strangely no mention nor provision was made in the constitution for education. Neither was there any sort of criminal code; perhaps it was deemed unnecessary. The affairs of government functioned under this constitution until 1887 when municipal government was regularly instituted and the territory of the original settlement with adjacent land was formed into the municipalities of Gimli and Bifrost.

As early as 1877 there was established in the colony a publishing company for the purpose of printing periodicals, books and a newspaper. The first of these periodicals was the paper "Framfari" (The Progressive). At least seven periodicals were published in the community at various periods between 1877 and 1911.

Most pioneer settlements in Canada have had the good fortune to have in them stalwart men of courage, determination and vision. New Iceland was no exception. It had many such men among its original settlers; hence it is very difficult to single out particular individuals as leaders. Space permits mention of only two as examples representing the type of leadership given by such men. Perhaps the most widely known among the original settlers was Sigtryggur Jonasson. During the later development of the Gimli district, none played a more important part than Gudni Thorsteinson. Despite the fact that these men were personally well known throughout the settlement comparatively few know the vital part they played in its early establishment and later development and progress.

Sigtryggur Jonasson, the first Ice-

lander to settle in Canada arriving in this country September 12, 1872, spent the first three years in Ontario. In 1875 he was entrusted by the Canadian government along with John Taylor with selecting the site for the first Icelandic colony in Canada and later the government placed him in charge of various Icelandic immigration groups arriving here. After locating, in 1876, he became the owner and partner in several of the original business enterprises established within the colony, such as lake transportation facilities and the saw mill which sawed most of the lumber produced during the first years within the colony. A liberal in politics all his life he was editor of the *Lögberg* for six years and later edited other Icelandic periodicals. In 1886 he became the first Icelandic member of the Manitoba Legislature. One of his greatest contributions to the welfare of the settlement was his eventually successful agitation for extending the railway to the community. Among the great leaders in almost every worth-while community endeavor was the late Gudni Thorsteinson, whose sound judgment and wise leadership played an important part in the destiny, development and progress of the Gimli community. Although it was not until 1885 that he arrived in the settlement his influence was soon felt. During his career of over sixty years of continuous service to the community there was virtually no local public office that he did not fill, at one time or another, with honor and distinction. It is not surprising that Bruce Hutchison, in his book "The Unknown Country" refers to him as the patriarch of Gimli. Mr. Thorsteinson is reputed to have been the best educated among those in the early community. An avid reader, and a keen student, he continued his self education in almost every field of knowl-

ledge by means of his ever expanding library, now bequeathed to a cultural organization of the community where he was born in Iceland. On his arrival in the settlement he organized and taught at the first two English schools. Later he led the movement to have the Municipality of Gimli organized and served as its first secretary for a period of twelve years. In 1891 he was appointed postmaster at Gimli, an office which he held until his death, June 3, 1948. In 1935 he was awarded a silver medal by King George V. for faithful and meritorious service in the Post Office Dept. In 1887 he established the first Icelandic library at Gimli and continued as one of the leaders in that organization until the end of his active days. When it was proposed to extend the railway from Winnipeg Beach along a westerly route by-passing Gimli his untiring efforts were in a large measure responsible for getting the present lake front route accepted. Before the arrival of qualified medical doctors in the district he served for many years as the community doctor. His knowledge of disease and internal medicine enabled him to treat his patients with considerable success.

As the editor of one of the early periodicals published within the community he played an important part in moulding public opinion and directing constructive policy in community affairs. In public community office he served as health officer for the Manitoba government, as magistrate, as member of village council and school board, and took an active part in the religious organizations functioning in the community.

To a large extent the lake has played an important part in the economy of the settlement since its origin.

Justified was also the original estimate of the value of the forest. Its tam-

arac, spruce, poplar and pine, in the form of cordwood, pulpwood, shingles and lumber, have found ready sale and have considerably supplemented the settlers other income. Inland from the lake, the soil once drained has been found productive and well suited for all types of crops common in the Canadian west. As a result prosperous mixed farming has become the main industry. Co-operative creameries at Arborg and Riverton produce annually well over a million pounds of excellent butter. In later years, fur farming has become a very considerable industry. The town of Gimli itself, has, in the last ten years, undergone phenomenal growth and development.

In 1885 after the exodus of most of its original founders only a few families remained, but a new influx began in the 1890's. The arrival of the railway in 1905 gave it a new impetus; numerous places of business were established and a few Winnipeg people built summer homes. In 1908 it was incorporated as a village, with the late Johannes Sigurdson as its first mayor. The present town hall was originally built as a two room school in 1900. In 1915 a new six room brick school was erected and in 1941 two further rooms were added. Presently there is under construction a separate four room collegiate.

The period from 1905 to 1939 was marked by slow but gradual development. The last decade has, however, shown unusual development, which included a great influx of permanent residents, construction of a large number of fine new business buildings and private homes of modern design.

Gimli is now best known as a fishing centre and a summer resort. During the recent war years one of Western Canada's largest air ports was built two miles west of the town, and hundreds

of pilots have been trained there. Since the war it has been used as a summer training camp for cadets. Located just near town is also the Department of Education summer school camp for teachers.

In 1947 Gimli was incorporated as a town and now has a permanent population of over 1200. During the summer months campers almost double the population.

The town and community is served by a fully modern forty-bed hospital made possible by the generous bequest of one of the pioneers, the late Mr. B. B. Johnson. A fine memorial recreation and community centre has recently been erected and fully paid for by voluntary contributions of its citizens. New business places include a modern hotel, post office, telephone exchange, bank, bowling alleys, theatre, milk pasteurization plant, numerous stores, garages and other usual places of business.

Besides the local club many active organizations serve the community. Prominent among them are: the Chamber of Commerce, Kinsmen club, and the Women's Institute, which have sponsored many worthwhile community enterprises, and have in no small measure assisted the active municipal authorities, now headed by mayor Egilson to make Gimli one of Manitoba's more progressive small towns.

In spite of a new influx of settlers about the turn of the century into the districts Geysir, Framnes, Vidir, surrounding the new prosperous and progressive village of Arborg, it had become evident by 1898 that the whole region, originally allotted to the Icelanders, would not all be settled by them. Accordingly the west part of this territory was opened up for immigrants from Central European coun-

tries who were then arriving in Canada in large numbers.

'With very few exceptions the original settlers arriving in 1875 have passed on. At least two, a brother and sister, who spent all the seventy-five years in Husavik district remain near the original home of their parents. They are Vigfus Arason, 83, and his sister, Sigrun Kernested, 81. Both are in good health and still have vivid recollections of their journey to the colony and the suffering they endured during the first years. One other person of that group, Mrs. Gislina Olson, 81, resides with one of her daughters, Mrs. R. Anderson, in Winnipeg. She still knits fancy socks and does exceedingly fine embroidery of which any expert handcraft worker might well be proud. Unfortunately she is now confined to hospital with a fractured hip and regretted her inability to be present at the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration, as she had anticipated.

Seventy-five years have transformed the desolate shore and the bogs which the pioneers first viewed, into thriving and prosperous settlements. The swamps have been drained, the land cleared and tilled and all the principal centres are served by all weather highways. The maintenance of cultural pursuits, the fondest dream of the pioneers has been realized. The third and fourth generation descendants have now access to libraries, active church organizations, fine elementary and secondary schools whose graduates in large numbers continue their education at University and other centres of higher learning. The original one-room log cabins of the pioneer have now been replaced by fine homes with all available modern conveniences.

In many respects the advantages of the site for settlement as estimated by the site-selecting committee have

proven justified. The lake has yielded millions of pounds of many varieties of valuable fish annually. In the 1948-49 season approximately 16½ million pounds were caught having a gross value of over \$1,800,000 to the fishermen and provided part or full-time employment to about 3600 men. The Lake Winnipeg Whitefish has earned the reputation of being the finest produced on the continent, and the Lake Winnipeg Gold Eye, now unfortunately almost extinct, has to many fish fanciers no equal as a delicacy, when smoked.

Steadfastness of purpose, industry

and thrift, have enabled the second and succeeding generations of the pioneers to prosper and fulfil the envisioned aspirations of the original settlers. Few indeed of those living within the boundaries of the original colony need to regret the decision of their forefathers to form the colony of New Iceland.

Icelandic culture and traditions within the Gimli community are being maintained through such organizations as the local Icelandic Library Assn., the Gimli branch of the Icelandic National League, and the annual Icelandic Celebrations held in the Gimli Park.

#### ON THE WAY TO CAMBRIDGE

Mr. and Mrs. John Madden with their young son recently left for Cambridge, England, where they plan to stay for two and a half years. Mr. Madden took his B. A., degree at the University of Manitoba and his M. A., at the University of Toronto. He was

granted the I.O.D.E. overseas scholarship for Manitoba, and plans to study at Cambridge for his Doctors degree in economics. Mrs. Madden was a graduate nurse before her marriage. She is the daughter of Mrs. Violet Ingaldson of Winnipeg and the late Ingimar Ingaldson, formerly of Arborg.

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